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COVENANT THEOLOGY AND ETHICS IN THE THOUGHT OF JOHN CALVIN AND JOHN PRESTON

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CHAPTER ONE

REFORMED COVENANT THEOLOGY IN RECENT SCHOLARSHIP

1. Trends in Twentieth-Century Scholarship

Twentieth-century scholarship of the Reformed tradition has had a tendency to argue that there existed fundamental differences between the theology of John Calvin and the theology of the English Puritans.[1] This scholarship does not deny points of similarity, as seen for instance in the emphasis on the need for a scriptural theology. But scholarship since the publication of Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, has continually noted that Puritanism was forced to modify and improve Calvin's theology, especially in regard to the problem of the certainty of salvation.[2] According to Weber,

> the question, Am I one of the elect? must sooner or later have arisen for every believer and have forced all other interests into the background. And how can I be sure of this state of grace? For Calvin himself this was not a problem . . . Accordingly, to the question of how the individual can be certain of his own election, he has at bottom only the answer that we should be content with the knowledge that God has chosen and depend further only on that implicit trust in Christ which is the result of true faith . . . The elect differ externally in this life in no

> way from the damned . . . with the single exception of that finaliter expectant, trusting faith. The elect thus are and remain God's invisible Church.[3]

Weber then contends that the Puritans were forced into the position of seeking criteria by which one could know he is of the elect. The Puritan divines offered two kinds of pastoral advice: (1) one has "an absolute duty to consider oneself chosen, and to combat all doubts as temptations of the devil, since lack of self-confidence is the result of insufficient faith, hence imperfect grace," and (2) "in order to attain . . . self-confidence intense worldly activity is recommended as the most suitable means. It and it alone disperses religious doubts and gives the certainty of grace."[4] Thus, according to Weber, Puritanism differed from the thought of Calvin by contending that certainty of salvation could be known through correct ethical behavior, while arguing at the same time that one must exercise boldness in believing that he has been chosen. But the important point to note is that Weber contends that these proofs are missing in Calvin's theology, and hence the later Calvinists were forced to develop them.

Twentieth-century scholarship has also emphasized profound differences between Calvin and the Puritans in regard to covenant theology, and since the intent of this dissertation is to establish the role of the covenant concept in the thought of two theologians of the Reformed tradition, it will be appropriate at this point to give careful consideration to the scholarship that has been done on covenant theology in the Calvinistic tradition.

W. Adams Brown, in his article on covenant theology in the _Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics_, makes a clear distinction between the covenant idea and the covenant theology:

> The covenant idea is common Christian property. It is an inheritance of Christianity from the Old Testament, which frequently describes the relation between Jahweh and His people in terms of a covenant, entered into either with individual Israelites or with the nation as a whole. The covenant theology describes a special type of Christian thought which gives this idea central importance not elsewhere assigned to it, and uses it as the organizing principle of the entire theological system.[5]

As Brown indicates, the tendency of this theology was to focus on two agreements that God had made with man. The first, made with Adam as the federal head of the human race, promised him and his descendants eternal life on the condition that he remain obedient. When Adam failed in his tasks, a second agreement or covenant was made with Christ as the second Adam, on behalf of the elect, promising forgiveness of sin and eternal life through the perfect obedience of Christ. Brown writes: "The covenant of grace differs from the covenant of works in the fact that it adds to the law the promise, i.e., the disclosure of the means through which Adam's original fault is to be repaired and the blessings of salvation won by Christ to be mediated to the elect."[6]

Brown prefigures much of recent covenant theology scholarship in understanding the origin of covenant theology to lie in the problem of "the reconciliation of the sovereignty of God with man's assurance of salvation."[7] While the idea of the covenant can be found in the thought of various sixteenth-century theologians (Bullinger, Ursinus, Levianus), Brown sees covenant theology, as it existed among the Puritans (John Preston, William Ames, William Perkins, and later Puritans such as Richard Baxter and Peter Bulkeley), as an attempt to undermine strict Calvinism, with its notions of the sovereignty of God and predestination. Covenant theology sought to limit the arbitrariness of God. Brown states:

> To its more earnest advocates the covenant theology, as distinct from the type of thought which it opposed, expressed the difference between a God whose purpose was known and whose character could be trusted, and a God whose nature was mysterious and whose actions were unpredictable.[8]

Perry Miller, in his work on Puritan covenant theology, continues Brown's contention that this theology involved a significant departure from the thought of Calvin.[9] Miller writes that covenant theology was a seventeenth-century development of the Puritans who "were compelled, in order to preserve the truths already known, to add to their theology at least one that hitherto had not been known, or at least not emphasized, the doctrine of the covenant of grace."[10] Miller goes on to state that "the development of the theory must be viewed as a part of that seventeenth-century systematization of Calvinism and was designed to counteract certain weaknesses in the original creed . . . ."[11] The essential weaknesses of Calvin's theology involved the transcendence of God. Two problems immediately became apparent. The Calvinists asked: "If man must wait upon God for grace, and grace is irrespective of works . . . why worry about works at all?" And, how can one gain satisfactory assurance of his salvation?[12] According to Miller, the inability to answer adequately these questions led to the Arminian and Antinomian heresies. Thus, covenant theology was created as a way of dealing with the fact that Calvin's thought failed to provide sufficient ethical sanctions and, furthermore, was deficient in the doctrine of assurance. The covenant of grace established assurance by offering a logical and definite system in which God entered into a contractual relationship with man, through the various stages of the covenant, so that, if one becomes a member of the covenant, doubt concerning one's salvation will cease. Having gained assurance, sufficient ethical sanctions could be obtained through the covenant concept, not only by stressing the obligations of the individual who is in the covenant, but by maintaining that the first step in owning the covenant involves moral effort. Miller writes that

> as soon as the relationship of God to man was conceived in this fashion, the corollary became obvious that the terms of a covenant may be known in advance . . . if we may know the terms, we may be encouraged, in advance of our conversions, even while we possess nothing more than our 'natural gifts,' to commence a course of obedience.[13]

Numerous scholars have had a tendency to accept Miller's conclusion that there are fundamental differences between the theology of the Puritans and the thought of Calvin, as seen most clearly in the development of covenant theology. Hence, Wallace Notestein, in _The English People on the Eve of Colonization: 1603-1630_, writes that

> some of the Puritans developed the theory of the covenant. It was not wholly a new idea; it was to be found in the writing of William Tyndale. But Perkins, Preston, Sibbes, and Ames developed the notion and their ideas were carried to New England and worked out still further. Perkins had declared that if the most infinitesimal element of faith was in the soul, that was the work of God's spirit . . . . it was a theory that took the curse off predestination and gave the sinner grounds for hope.[14]

Likewise, Christopher Hill, in his _Puritanism and Revolution_, acknowledges his debt to Miller, and states that covenant theology was created so as to overcome the absolute decrees of Calvinism. He writes:

> The covenant theology emphasized God's love and mercy rather than the bleak arbitrary power of the absolute Calvinist deity. It established a relationship of contract between God and his elect to which the latter could appeal . . . . The effect of the covenant theology was to free men from the blind and incomprehensible eternal decrees of an unknowable God, and from the intolerable sense of sin which weighed so heavily on early seventeenth-century Puritanism. It re-established moral obligation on a clearer, more rational basis.[15]

Everett Emerson reports that similar positions can be found in other scholars as well.[16]

Thus, Miller, and the scholars who have adopted his conclusions, contend that covenant theology emerged out of historical and psychological necessity, since the original Calvinistic theology could not cope with the potential problems of Antinomianism and Arminianism. The power behind covenant theology lies in the creativity of the great Puritan divines, in their ability to devise a theology that would handle these problems.

In addition to those who argue that the origins of covenant theology can be found in the creativity of the Puritan preachers, there have been several other attempts to uncover the beginnings of this theological concept.

Leonard Trinterud has contended that Puritanism first emerged in Tudor England through the work of William Tyndale, John Frith, John Bale, John Hooper, John Bradford, and their associates.[17] Furthermore, the writings of these

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men contain a theology of the covenant, in which they stress the conditionality of God's promises. Trinterud writes that "all strictly religious matters, public and private, all moral standards, public and private, and all sense of ethical and religious obligation are founded upon the sworn covenant promise to obey God's law."[18] Trinterud argues that the background for the development of this theology lies, first of all, in the law-social contract theory that had some popularity in medieval English thought. But more importantly, influence was exerted upon these individuals by the early Rhineland reformers. For instance, the Basel reformer Oecolampadius, in a 1525 commentary on Isaiah, developed a covenant theology that stressed conditionality. Similar concepts can be found in Zwingli (Zurich) and Capito (Strassburg). Trinterud states that "from these beginnings the law-covenant principals came quickly to be the organizing principle of the entire Rhineland Reformation movement despite whatever other differences of opinion may have existed among various leaders."[19] After Tyndale, Frith, and their colleagues seized upon covenant theology as a working concept (before Calvin published his first book), their ideas were immediately adopted by other English reformers. During the reign of Edward VI numerous Rhineland theologians came to England and "set the stamp of international Reformed approval, so to speak, upon this theology."[20]

This conditional conception of the covenant was not challenged until the time of the Marian exile, when one party of the exiles went to Geneva, and came under the influence of John Calvin. Trinterud contends that while Calvin had a state-contract theory in regard to political matters, his theological conception of the covenant was quite different from the popular English view: "For Calvin, and so in the Geneva Bible, the covenant of God is God's promise to man, which obligates God to fulfill. Moreover, in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ, God did actually fulfill that promise to which his covenant bound him . . . . The sacraments are witnesses, attestations, or seals to the effect that God has long since fulfilled his covenant, his promise."[21] Thus, Calvin's view differed from the covenant conception of the Rhineland and the English reformers where "the covenant is a conditional promise on God's part, which has the effect of drawing out of man a responding promise of obedience, thus creating a mutual pact or treaty. The burden of fulfillment rests upon man, for he must first obey in order to bring God's reciprocal obligation into force."[22]

According to Trinterud, the Genevan group, upon their return to England, sought control of the Elizabethan English Church, but lost out to the larger group returning from the Rhineland. With this failure went the failure of their conception of the covenant, with the result that the conditional covenant became the organizing principle of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Puritan theology.

The import of Trinterud's discussion lies in his contention that (1) the origins of Puritan covenant theology can be found in England and the Rhineland, prior to the work of Calvin, and (2) the conception of the covenant as developed by Oecolampadius, Tyndale, Frith, and the later Puritans, stresses conditionality, and therefore is opposed to the covenant conception found in Calvin's theology. While the first point involves a clear departure from Perry Miller's scholarship, the second point continues the Miller thesis, stressing the differences between the thought of Calvin and that of the Puritans.

In an article written in 1963, Gens Møller sought to investigate the beginnings of Puritan covenant theology, including the kind of covenant conception employed by Calvin.[23] One of the basic premises of Møller's article is that "theology, whether in Cambridge or Edinburgh, Leyden or Heidelberg, was basically the same, i.e., the theology of Calvin."[24] But, while one must stress the similarities in covenant theology, there are some differences. One type of covenant theology stresses conditionality, while another type focuses on the activities of a graceful God, thereby remaining more faithful to the Reformation principle of justification by faith alone.

According to Møller, the original covenant conception can be seen in the theology of Tyndale, who was influenced by Bullinger of Zurich. Tyndale uses the covenant idea in order to stress the responsibility of the Christian. Although "Tyndale knows, with the Reformers, that man and man's works are nothing in the eyes of God, he yet manages to maintain the moral obligation by means of the covenant which contains God's commandments."[25] Thus, even though faith plays a crucial role in the justification process, the promises are given to us "on this condition and covenant on our part, that we henceforth love the law of God, to walk therein, and to do it, and fashion our lives thereafter."[26] Love of the law is a sign of true faith. Furthermore, through the act of baptism, one enters into the covenant, and thereby is bound to keep the law. According to Møller, this kind of covenant theology, stressing mutuality and conditionality, continues to thrive in England, but comes into conflict with the more sophisticated covenant theology of Calvin.

Møller summarizes Calvin's covenant theology in the following way:

> (1) like his predecessors Calvin is well aware of the ethical significance of the covenant idea, but he--the champion of the doctrine of predestination--stresses the sovereignty of God in his covenant-dealing with man. (2) Like his predecessors Calvin shows that the covenant was substantially the same in every phase of the history of salvation. (3) Calvin's covenant theology is primarily a theology of the covenant of grace which is opposed to the 'damnationis ministerium' of the law. It is on this point that Calvin makes his most important contribution to the covenant theology.[27]

Calvin's covenant theology was spread through the Genevan Bible of 1560. According to Møller, "this Bible is the work of Calvinists like Whittingham, and the covenant theology contained in the notes is Calvin's."[28]

In order to analyze the influence of these similar yet slightly different covenant theologies, Møller investigates the type of covenant theology found in William Perkins, who greatly influenced the later generation of Puritans. According to Møller, Perkins was a Calvinist and supported the doctrine of double predestination. Thus he begins his theology with the doctrine of election, so that, when he introduces his covenant theology, he is able to protect the sovereignty of God. Since he stresses the doctrine of election and the sovereignty of God, Perkins cannot be said to deviate from Calvin even when he incorporates certain notions that are "in the vein of Bullinger or Tyndale." Perkins writes:

> God's covenant, is his contract with man,

> concerning the obtaining of life eternal, upon a certain condition. This covenant consists of two parts: God's promise to man, man's promise to God. God's promise to man, is that, whereby he bindeth himself to man to be his God, if he performs the condition. Man's promise to God, is that, whereby he voweth his allegiance unto his Lord, and to performe the condition between them.[29]

Even when Perkins divides the covenant into (1) the covenant of works and (2) the covenant of grace, he is "merely interpreting Calvin's thoughts on the law and the foedus legale, as expressed in the second book of his Institutes."[30] Perkins follows Calvin in claiming that faith and repentance are the conditions of the covenant of grace. Only in regard to his understanding of the sacraments in relation to the covenant does Perkins deviate from Calvin, in that he has a tendency to incorporate more of the Tyndalian notion, claiming that through the sacraments one binds himself to obedience, the successful performance of which thereby binds God to the fulfillment of his covenant promises.

Therefore, Møller argues that Perkins, and the other Puritan systematic theologians as well (Preston, Ames), faithfully follow Calvin's covenant theology. While stressing the ethical implications of the covenant, Perkins, like Calvin, maintains a clear distinction between law and grace, and does not fall victim to the more popular conditional covenant of Tyndale. However, this is not to say that the

Calvin covenant conception becomes predominant among the later Puritans, for there is a tendency in later Puritan theology to capitalize on the vow made in baptism as a way of stressing the conditional and mutual nature of the covenant, thereby finding additional grounds for ethical responsibility. Therefore, in spite of Perkins' indebtedness to Calvin, "the influence of Tyndale's cruder covenant teaching does not disappear."[31]

The importance of Møller's essay for this study can be summarized as follows: (1) a well-developed covenant theology can be found in the thought of Calvin; (2) the similarities between Calvin's covenant theology and the covenant theology of the great Puritan preachers far outweigh the dissimilarities; (3) unlike Tyndale's and the "cruder" kind of covenant theology that continued to exist in seventeenth-century Puritanism, Calvin's covenant theology stressed the sovereignty of God, while playing down notions of mutuality and conditionality. Unlike Tyndale, Calvin makes a clear distinction between law and grace, even though he recognizes the ethical implications of God's covenant with man.

II. Hypothesis Under Investigation

Having summarized the basic positions of Miller, Trinterud, and Møller, we may now set forth the basic contention of this dissertation. The following chapters will seek to demonstrate that Miller and his followers, as well as Trinterud, have emphasized too extensively the differences between the theology of Calvin and the theology of the Puritans of the early seventeenth-century. In order to accomplish this task, this study will seek to examine the thought of John Calvin (1509-1564) and the Puritan theologian John Preston (1587-1628). It will be maintained that Calvin has a well-developed theology of the covenant, and that his conception of the covenant is designed to provide the foundation of both morality and assurance of salvation. Having dealt with Calvin, this study will move to a discussion of covenant theology and ethics in the thought of Preston, in order to compare Calvin's theology of the covenant with that of a representative Puritan theologian of the early seventeenth century.

In light of Møller's essay, a number of questions need to be asked: (1) In his covenant theology, how does Calvin relate law and grace? (2) While acknowledging the importance of the covenant concept, is Møller correct in suggesting that Calvin's covenant theology does not contain significant notions of conditionality and mutuality? (3) How is Calvin's ethic related to his theology of the covenant? (4) Is the relationship between covenant theology and ethics in Calvin's thought different from the kind of relationship between covenant theology and ethics that one finds in early seventeenth-century Puritanism? The chapters to follow will attempt to answer these questions.

The hypothesis undergirding this study is that Calvin's covenant theology, like the covenant theology of Preston, contains notions of conditionality and mutuality, and that these notions provide the theological foundations for an ethic of obligation. It will be argued that the theologies of Calvin and Preston seek to combine an emphasis on the gracious activity of the sovereign God in granting the covenant with an emphasis on the obligations of the individual who is elected to salvation. The question to be asked is: what is the theological basis for the ethic of obligation that one finds in the thought of these two theologians of the Reformed tradition of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century? This dissertation will seek to demonstrate that the basis for this ethic can be found in the notion of the covenant. It will be argued that Calvin and Preston conceive the covenant to be unconditional in its origins, but conditional in its fulfillment, in the sense that God requires reciprocation, and even though such reciprocation can take place only through divine grace, a life of obedience is required of every covenant member. The unconditionality of the covenant is derived from the belief that God chooses whom He will for salvation, and that there is nothing that man in his sinful state can do to earn salvation. Calvin states:

> As scripture then clearly shows, we say that God once established by his eternal and unchangeable plan those whom he long before determined once for all to receive into salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, he would devote to destruction. We assert that, with respect to the elect, this plan was founded upon his freely given mercy, without regard to human worth; but by his just and irreprehensible but incomprehensible judgment he has barred the door of life to those whom he has given over to damnation.[32]

The individual who is chosen by God to enter into the covenant relationship must respond with a life of radical obedience. Obligation is created by the omnipotent but merciful God, who draws some men toward himself.

Since twentieth-century scholarship has recognized the motif of conditionality in Puritan covenant theology, careful consideration will have to be given to this motif in the covenant theology of Calvin. This dissertation will argue that in the theology of Calvin the covenant conception includes notions of conditionality and mutuality. Attention will have to be given to the exact meaning associated with these notions, in order to ascertain the way in which Calvin seeks to combine divine initiative with human obligation. While it is expected that Preston's theology relies more heavily than Calvin's theology on the contractual significance of the covenant, notions of mutuality and conditionality are included in Calvin's presentation of the

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covenant. In regard to the mutuality of the covenant, Calvin makes the following statements:

> As I observed elsewhere, there is always to be presupposed a mutual relation and correspondence between the covenant of God and our faith, in order that the unfeigned consent of the latter may answer to the faithfulness of the former.[33]
>
> Let us consider the contents or substance of this doctrine which we have touched, namely, that our Lord, having sought us out, gives himself to us, and that in such a way that is bound, as it were, by solemn covenant, so that we may freely come to him, and require him to perform his promises. But . . . let us also understand on what condition it is that he is so bound to us. For when we have been once bound after that fashion, if we make little reckoning of so inestimable a benefit or if we regret it and disdain it, do we think that such contempt of ours shall remain unpunished?[34]

These statements point to Calvin's recognition of the mutuality of the covenant. However, it is expected that the following study will also result in an awareness that Calvin, unlike Preston, always seeks to protect the doctrine of God's transcendence. In the following analysis of Calvin's covenant theology, it will be maintained that conditional language is employed as a way to set forth the responsibility of man as a member of the covenant, without this theology becoming involved in notions of human ability and merit. But the covenantal requirement includes obedience as well as faith, for, as Calvin states, "he is become our God upon this condition, that we also should be his people."[35] Likewise, Calvin writes: "For we have been adopted as sons by the Lord with this one condition, that our lives express Christ, the bond of our adoption. Accordingly, unless we give and devote ourselves to righteousness, we not only revolt from our Creator with wicked perfidy, but we also abjure our Savior himself."[36]

Support for this hypothesis can be found in an essay by Anthony A. Hoekema. Hoekema contends that covenant theology is the "key" to understanding Calvin's interpretation of the God-man relationship. In "Calvin's teachings on the covenant both the sovereign grace of God and the serious responsibility of man came into sharp and clear focus."[37] Like later covenant theologians, Calvin contends that "the covenant of grace has its origin wholly in the undeserved grace of God, but when once established, that covenant imposes mutual obligations on both God and man."[38] The granting of the covenant to Abraham involved no meritorious work on Abraham's part. But Calvin goes on to state that "inasmuch as mutual consent is required in all compacts . . . when God invites his people to receive grace, he stipulates that they should give him the obedience of faith."[39] Thus, in interpreting Calvin's position, Hoekema states that

> though God owes us nothing, and though we owe him full obedience by virtue of the fact that he is our Creator, yet God has voluntarily condescended to make with man his covenant, in which he promises to be the God of his people

> and therefore to shower upon them every needful blessing for this life and the life to come, with the understanding that man, in turn, is obligated by this covenant to show his thankfulness for God's grace by being faithful to his covenant obligations.[40]

Therefore, argues Hoekema, Calvin's covenant theology involves mutuality, with the consequence that notions of God's sovereignty and human responsibility are complementary to each other. Also, there is conditionality in his covenant conception. In commenting on the verse "God will keep covenant to a thousand generations of them that love him," Calvin writes:

> Note ye, says [Moses], that forasmuch as God has promised your father Abraham to be the God of his seed after him, he will not fail you. But yet for all that look that he walk warily . . . for the covenant is made with condition, that ye must have a right meaning heart. Therefore think not but that your God can drive you out of his heart and out of his church, if he find you unworthy of the benefit which he has offered to you.[41]

The conclusions drawn by Hoekema form the working basis of the hypothesis of the study that will follow. It should be mentioned that Hoekema is no doubt correct when he states that it is impossible to "find in the covenant doctrine the central or fundamental principle of Calvin's theology."[42] Hoekema goes on to write that "the very idea that Calvin took one doctrine as the fundamental principle of his theological system is misleading, because it suggests that Calvin's primary concern was to construct a logically consistent system--one built up by deduction from some original first premise comparable to Descartes cogito, ergo sum."[43] Hoekema thus repeats the conclusion that Hermann Bauke reached in 1922, when he argued that the key to the understanding of Calvin "cannot consist in any one intrinsic feature, any single point of dogma, any central or root doctrine from which everything else could be derived."[44] However, this thesis will maintain that the covenant idea is of extreme importance to Calvin, and while it may not serve as the principle from which his entire theology is deduced, it does provide him with a theoretical foundation for his theology of history and, more important for this study, it serves as the theological basis for his ethic.

Weber, Brown, and Miller are certainly correct in arguing that the Puritans were faced with a serious problem in attempting to find assurance of salvation. The Calvinistic emphasis on the sovereignty of God contributed to the difficulties. When one accepted the Reformation doctrine of the total depravity of man, the problem became all the more difficult. But these authors have seemingly failed to realize that Calvin himself was faced with the problem of assurance. To a certain extent, Luther's original quest for a merciful God underlies the theology of of the Reformation. Calvin's emphasis on man's sinful nature, in addition to his understanding of God's predestinating activity, meant that a solution to the problem of assurance was necessary, not just for later Reformed churchmen, but for Calvin himself. Calvin as a pastor was faced with the same question that proved to be onerous for the later Puritan preachers: how can the pastor encourage his flock to be obedient to God's Word? It is the contention of this dissertation that Calvin sought to find the solution through the covenant idea. Theologically, Calvin's understanding of God's historical dealings with man, through the granting of a series of covenants, allows Calvin to mediate the voluntaristic emphasis that lies behind his understanding of the transcendence of God. Ethically, covenant theology allows Calvin, as well as the later Puritans, to discuss in detail, according to the Abrahamic model, the kind of life that the covenanted man will live, thereby providing a theological foundation for Christian obedience, and assurance of salvation to him who is allowed, through the grace of God, to conform his life to this model. The "conditional accessories" of the covenant outlined for the believer the basic obligations of the regenerate man. Thus, Calvin's understanding of the manner in which the covenant can be used to encourage obedience can be found more clearly in his commentaries (many of which were originally given as lectures to the church members of Geneva), rather than in the Institutes. Here one sees Calvin in his pastoral mood, coming to grips with the problem of Christian living and individual assurance of salvation. This also helps explain the fact why earlier scholarship which concentrated on the Institutes, neglected to see the parallels between Calvin and the later Puritans in regard to the employment of the covenant concept. Calvin's sermons and commentaries give ample evidence to the fact that he sought to develop a theological foundation for the necessity of strict obedience and for solving the problem of assurance. This theological foundation is God's covenantal relationship with the believer.

Therefore the first part of this dissertation will attempt to demonstrate that (1) Calvin has a well-developed covenant theology; (2) covenant theology provides the theological foundation for Calvin's ethic of obligation; (3) Calvin contends that the correct performance of covenantal obligations by the man who possesses genuine faith can lead to some (although perhaps, ultimately incomplete) assurance of salvation.

The underlying intention of this dissertation is to contribute to Møller's contention that Reformed theologians of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries are in basic agreement. One could contribute to this intention by studying any of the important doctrines that one finds in the early Reformed tradition: the sovereignty of God (with the corollary doctrine of predestination), the depravity of man, faith as the means to a knowledge of God, and scripture as the source of theology. But the covenant concept has been chosen, with its ethical implications, because it is in regard to this doctrine that scholars have had a tendency to over-emphasize the differences between Calvin and the Puritans. This dissertation does not attempt to deal with the history of the covenant concept; rather, it attempts to describe the similarities and, where they exist, differences between Calvin and the later Reformed theologian John Preston. Yet it is the hypothesis of this dissertation that the similarities far outweigh the dissimilarities, especially since conditional and mutual notions play an important part in Calvin's covenant theology, thus bringing together the covenant idea and ethics in a manner similar to the Puritans of the early seventeenth century.

Therefore, after ascertaining the role of covenant theology and ethics in the thought of Calvin, this investigation will turn to the thought of Preston. In our analysis of Preston, as in the analysis of Calvin, attention will be focused on the kind of covenant conception employed,

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the relationship between covenant theology and the doctrine of election, the ethic that is related to the covenant concept, and the relationship between covenant theology and assurance of salvation.[45]

The final chapter of the dissertation will involve a comparative study of the major areas of agreement and disagreement between Calvin and Preston. Several explanations will then be given for the differences that have been noted. The chapter will conclude with an assessment of covenant theology and ethics in the thought of the two theologians in question.

It is hoped that the dissertation will make a contribution to scholarship of the early Reformed tradition, particularly by establishing the type of agreement that exists between Calvin and Preston. The historian of religion must seek to ascertain the development and transformation of theological concepts. But included within this task is the necessity of understanding continuity. Hopefully, through an investigation into the continuity that exists between Calvin and Preston, it will be possible to gain a clearer perspective of that which separates the theology of Calvin from Puritan theology of the early seventeenth century.[46]

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FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

[1] In so doing, these scholars are departing from earlier scholarship that simply labelled Puritan theology "Calvinism." Examples of earlier scholarship can be found in Ezra H. Byington, The Puritan in England and New England (Boston, 1900) and F. H. Foster, A Genetic History of the New England Theology (Chicago, 1907).

[2] Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (New York, 1958). First published, Archiv fur Sozialwissenshaft und Sozialpolitik, Vol. XX and XXI, 1904-1905; reprinted, with changes, 1920; first English translation, 1930.

[3] Weber, p. 110.

[4] Weber, pp. 111-112.

[5] W. Adams Brown, "Covenant Theology," in Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. James Hasting (New York, 1908), Vol. IV., p. 216.

[6] Brown, Vol. IV, p. 217.

[7] Brown, Vol. IV, p. 216.

[8] Brown, Vol. IV, p. 224.

[9] Miller's position can be found in The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century (Boston, 1954), first published 1939; "The Marrow of Puritan Divinity," in Errand Into the Wilderness (New York, 1964), first published 1935; "Preparation for Salvation in Seventeenth-Century New England," Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. IV, June 1943, pp. 253-286.

[10] Miller, The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century, p. 366.

[11] Miller, The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century, p. 366.

[12] Miller, "The Marrow of Puritan Divinity," in *Errand*, p. 54.

[13] Miller, "Preparation for Salvation in Seventeenth-Century New England," pp. 259-260.

[14] Wallace Notestein, *The English People on the Eve of Colonization: 1603-1630* (New York, 1954), p. 159.

[15] Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution* (New York, 1958), pp. 245-246.

[16] Everett H. Emerson, "Calvinism and Covenant Theology," *Church History*, Vol. XXV, 1956, footnote 3, p. 143. Emerson mentions Jerald C. Brauer, "Reflections on the Nature of English Puritanism," *Church History*, XXIII, 1954, pp. 99-108; Herschel Baker, *The Wars of Truth* (1952), p. 292; Herbert W. Schneider, *A History of American Philosophy* (1946), pp. 4ff.

[17] Leonard Trinterud, "The Origins of Puritanism," *Church History*, Vol. XX, March, 1951, pp. 37-57.

[18] Trinterud, p. 39.

[19] Trinterud, p. 41.

[20] Trinterud, p. 44.

[21] Trinterud, p. 45.

[22] Trinterud, p. 45.

[23] Gens Møller, "The Beginnings of Puritan Covenant Theology," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 14, April, 1963, pp. 46-67.

[24] Møller, p. 58.

[25] Møller, pp. 51-52.

[26] Møller, quoting Tyndale, p. 52.

[27] Møller, p. 50.

[28] Møller, p. 57.

[29] Møller, quoting Perkins, p. 59.

[30] Møller, p. 61.

[31] Møller, p. 67.

[32] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia, 1960), 3:21:7, p. 931.

[33] Commentary on Psalm 78:37, trans. James Anderson (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1949), Vol. 3, p. 254.

[34] Sermon on Deuteronomy 26: 16-19, *Corpus Reformatorum*, Vol. XXVIII, 293: "Et cependant regardons le contenu, ou la substance de ceste doctrine que nous avons touchee: c'est assavior que nostre Seigneur, apres nous avoir cerché, se donne à nous, voire et se donne à telle condition qu'il est comme obligé par contract solennel, et que nous pouvons franchement venir à luy pour le requerir qu'il accomplisse ses promesses. Et voila comme toutes nos oraisons doivent estre reiglees. Mais cependant aussi sachons à quelle condition c'est. Car quand nous aurons esté ainsi obligez, et que nous n'aurons tenu conte d'un tel bien et ci inestimable, que nous l'aurons reietté et desdaigne, pensons-nous qu'un tel mespris demeure impuni?" Trans. Arthur Golding, in Hoekema, p. 146. Calvin also states: "Since God grants us liberty to come to him, we must at least be mutually bound to him, and he must take promise of us that we will be his people . . . that we will no longer live after our own lusts but be ruled by him. There must be this mutual bond between us, that since God binds himself so to us, we also must come and submit ourselves wholly to him." *Corpus Reformatorum*, Vol. XXVIII, 288-289, trans. Golding, in Hoekema, p. 145.

[35] Sermon on Deuteronomy 26:16-19, *Corpus Reformatorum*, Vol. XXVIII, 292: "C'est a ceste condition-la qu'ils s'est fait nostre Dieu, que nous luy soyons aussi peuple."

[36] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3:6:3, p. 687. Hereafter only the book, chapter, paragraph, and page will be given.

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[37] Hoekema, p. 140.

[38] Hoekema, p. 140.

[39] Commentary on Exodus 24:5, Four Last Books of Moses, trans. Charles Bingham (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1950), Vol. 3, p. 321. Calvin also states that "as God binds himself to keep the promise given us, so the consent of faith and obedience is demanded from us." Commentary on Genesis 17:9, trans. John King (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1948), Vol. 1.

[40] Hoekema, p. 144.

[41] Sermon on Deuteronomy 7:7-10, Corpus Reformatorum, Vol. XXVI, 524, trans. A. Golding, in Hoekema, p. 156.

[42] Hoekema, p. 134.

[43] Hoekema, p. 134.

[44] Herman Bauke, Die Problem der Theologie Calvins, quoted in Wilhelm Niesel, The Theology of Calvin (Philadelphia, 1956), first published 1938 (Munich).

[45] For a biography of Preston see Irvonwy Morgan, Prince Charles's Puritan Chaplain (London, 1957). Along with William Perkins, Richard Sibbes, and William Ames, Preston was one of the major Puritan theologians in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. His works, issued posthumously, and consisting mostly in sermons, exercised an important influence on Puritan theology, on both sides of the Atlantic. Preston was first educated at King's College, Cambridge, in preparation for a diplomatic career. Having changed his vocational interests to philosophy and medicine, he entered Queen's College. Then in 1611, while a Fellow at Queen's, he heard a sermon by John Cotton, with the result that he again changed his studies, this time to divinity. From 1611 to his death in 1628, Preston advanced in power and prestige. He was very much involved in court politics, and served for a time as chaplain to Prince Charles. In 1622, he succeeded John Donne as preacher at Lincoln's Inn, and in the same year became Master of Emmanuel College.

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[46] Unlike Preston, whose scholarly work was cut short by his premature death, Calvin's immense literary output spans three decades. While the intent of this dissertation does not involve an examination of the intellectual development of Calvin during the period of 1534 to 1564, it is important to clarify the Calvin sources that are being used in the following investigation. The Library of Christian Classics edition of the Institutes, translated by F. L. Battles from the 1559 Latin text as edited by P. Barth and W. Niesel, allows the reader to apprehend the thought of the mature Calvin. In the Introduction to the Battles translation, J. T. McNeill remarks that "the Latin edition of 1559 must always be held to bear Calvin's most indisputable imprint of authority. Here, in his opening address to the reader, he speaks of the previous revisions by which the work had been enriched, and adds: 'Although I did not regret the labor spent, I was never satisfied until the work had been arranged in the order now set forth.'" (xxxvii) Furthermore, the 1559 Latin text was the basis for the first complete English translation of the Institutes in 1561, by Thomas Norton. The Norton translation served as the basic English edition of the Institutes from 1561 to the last edition in 1762. Between the first and last editions there were at least eight editions: 1562, 1574, 1578, 1582, 1587, 1599, 1611, 1634.

While the translation of the Institutes used in this dissertation is based on the 1559 text, it will be helpful to note a few characteristics of earlier editions. In his book, Le jeune Calvin: genèse et evolution de sa vocation réformatrice (Wiesbaden, 1955) A. Ganoczy engages in a careful study of the sources and content of the first edition of the Institutes, 1536. Ganoczy claims that Calvin had access to and utilized at various points the ideas of Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, and Bucer. Of these theologians, Luther's influence is most prominent, as seen for instance in the general structure of the Institutes which is based on Luther's Small Catechism. But despite the influence, Calvin seeks to be an independent thinker, and thus whatever ideas are borrowed are molded so that they conform to his own theological presuppositions, which in turn he wishes to submit to the authority of scripture. Even in the first edition of the Institutes, Ganoczy finds that Calvin's thought expressed itself in a dialectical method. The dialectical emphasis can be seen in the contrast of divine and human realities, the sinfulness and depravity of man in opposition to the greatness and goodness of God. This dialectical concern results in Calvin's desire to speak of God only as he has revealed himself to man, and to speak of man only as he is known through that revelation. The positive constructs of Calvin, such as the principles of *soli Deo gloria, solus Christus, verbum Dei*, are contained in this early edition.

But in order to see Calvin's early concern for certain motifs that are important to the 1559 edition, it is possible to focus on the concept of law, as Emil Kraeling has done in *The Old Testament Since the Reformation* (London, 1955). According to Kraeling, Calvin's treatment of law in the first part of the *Institutes* of 1536 is evangelical, stressing in Lutheran fashion the way in which the law humbles the sinner, thereby making grace possible. But in the development of this treatment, Calvin "Christianizes the Old Testament law," so that "he practically closes his eyes to the new moral values in the preaching of Jesus and reduces him to the level of a correct interpreter of Moses; for Jesus, he holds, did not add anything to the law--He merely did away with Pharisaic misinterpretation of it." (pp. 25-26). In regard to the 1539 edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin continues his attempt to Christianize the Old Testament. Kraeling writes: "In his revised interpretation of the Decalogue he now is bent on showing that it is a perfect code of morals. He assumes that each commandment contains a great deal more than the mere words express, and his way of discovering its full range is to inquire into the Lawgiver's intent. After Christianizing the Decalogue all along the line, he can affirm that the law is by no means abrogated, but is in full force for the Christian. In contrast to his earlier exposition of the first commandment, in which, like Luther, he had emphasized faith combined with love and hope as of cardinal importance, he now placed these things in a cultic framework, making them subsidiary, as it were, to divine *worship*." (p. 26) Furthermore, in this second edition, Calvin, in an appendix, emphasizes the one covenant in the history of salvation, so that "he sets up a concept of a 'society of God's people' into which men are 'adopted.' He thus substitutes the Church for the Jewish racial and national community." (p. 27) Likewise, Kraeling reports that in this same edition Calvin emphasizes the unity of the Old and New Testaments, believing that the differences are found only in administration. In these attempts Calvin's thought follows Zwingli rather than Luther. Kraeling maintains that Calvin's desire to bring together Hebrew and Jew, particularly in regard to law, continues to develop through the 1559 edition. Thus in regard to the 1559 edition, Kraeling writes that this desire "spelled such a Christianization of the Old Testament, and notably of the law, that the newness of the gospel was almost lost sight of. The latter is merely the fuller revelation of the mystery of Christ. The difference between the two revelations is only one of degree of clarity. And so in the ninth chapter of Book II, Calvin really abandons Paul's (and Luther's) antithesis of law and gospel." (p.31)

Thus on the basis of Ganoczy's work on the Institutes of 1536, and Kraeling's study of the first and later editions of the Institutes, it is possible to conclude that there is a clear line of development in Calvin's thought in regard to such concepts as the unity of the Old and New Testaments, the one covenant in the history of salvation, the role of grace during the Hebraic era, the validity of the law for the Christian. These themes are very important to the 1559 text, which serves as the basis for the English translation used in this dissertation. It is important to note that the seed for the full treatment of these themes can be found in the first edition of the Institutes, which consisted in six short chapters, compared to the eighty chapters of the 1559 edition. While it is beyond the scope of this footnote to set forth the historical reasons for Calvin's continuing concern for these motifs, it seems possible to argue that Calvin's political involvement in Geneva, coupled with the threat of the Anabaptists and Spiritualists, encouraged his concern for uniting the old and new covenants so that the moral law of the Hebrews would have a place of priority in the life of the Christian. The duty of the Christian is to glorify God, and thus obedience becomes an important motif in Calvin's thought. But in this concern for the Old Testament, there occurs a significant departure from Luther, as Kraeling points out in regard to the 1536 edition itself. It comes as no surprise then, to find that the 1559 edition involves an even further departure from Luther. Likewise, as this dissertation will seek to demonstrate, these motifs are given considerable priority in Calvin's commentaries.

The Commentary on Romans was the first to be published (1540), with the last being Ezekiel (1565), published one year after Calvin's death. Like the Institutes, the commentaries were translated into English during the Elizabethan era. For example, Psalms: 1571, Corinthians: 1577, Genesis: 1578, I John: 1580, Galatians: 1581, Deuteronomy: 1583, Hebrews: 1605. Likewise, sermons by Calvin were translated into English as early as 1549.

Finally, a word needs to be said regarding the Preston material. Preston's books were published posthumously, and consisted essentially in various sermons and lectures given by him during the latter part of the second and the third decades of the seventeenth century. Most frequently the material was edited by Richard Sibbs and John Davenport or Thomas Goodwin and Thomas Ball. Thus the premature death of Preston resulted in an incomplete theological system. The student of Preston would do well then to keep in mind the introductory remarks of Sibbs and Davenport to The New Covenant: "It had been much to have been desired (if it had so pleased the Father of Spirits) that this worthy man had survived the publishing of these, and other of his lectures: for then, no doubt, they would have come forth more refined, and digested; for, though there was very little or no mistake in taking them from his mouth, yet preaching, and writing, have their several graces. Things livened by the expression of the speaker, sometimes take well, which after, upon a mature review, seem either superfluous, or flat. And we often see men, very able to render their concepts in writing, yet not the happiest of speakers."

CHAPTER TWO

CALVIN'S COVENANT THEOLOGY

I. Introduction

It will be helpful to begin the following discussion of Calvin's covenant theology by first turning to his contention that "the covenant made with all the patriarchs is so much like ours in substance and reality that the two are actually one and the same."[1] Calvin insists on stressing continuity in the history of salvation, and this desire necessitates the affirmation that the old covenant and the new covenant are very much alike in matters of substance. Calvin writes against those "madmen . . . who regard the Israelites as nothing but a herd of swine."[2] Calvin is interested not so much in showing the "similarity" of the old and new covenants, but rather their "unity," and this unity leads Calvin to the conclusion that one should really speak of one covenant in the history of salvation.

Calvin attempts to demonstrate this unity by upgrading God's covenant with the Hebrews, claiming that (1) the Hebrews "were adopted into the hope of immortality," and hence were not simply interested in national prosperity

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and expansion; (2) "the covenant by which they were bound to the Lord was supported not by their own merits, but solely by the mercy of the God who called them"; (3) "they had and knew Christ as mediator, through whom they were joined to God and were to share his promises."[3] Calvin sees the essence of the new covenant as involving these same aspects: the hope of immortality, grace and not human merit as the foundation of the covenant, and Christ as the mediator of the covenant.

In regard to the first point, the divine commitment contained in the Hebraic covenant involved the promise of "the gospel," and since the heart of the gospel is concerned with eternal happiness, the Hebrews were directed toward the hope of immortality. To claim, as Calvin's enemy Servetus did, that the promises contained in the law and the prophets were intended only for the Christian, is to blind one's self to Paul's statement that whatever the law contains is without doubt intended specifically for those under the law.[4] Hence, Calvin contends that the Abrahamic covenant was a "spiritual" covenant directed toward the hope of immortality.

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Furthermore, like the new covenant, the Hebraic covenant was based on grace, rather than merit. This point will be dealt with in more detail in the discussion to follow of the Abrahamic covenant, but a few comments are here in order. Calvin writes: "Who dares to separate the Jews from Christ, since with them . . . was made the covenant of the gospel, the sole foundation of which is Christ? Who dares to estrange from the gift of free salvation those to whom we hear the doctrine of the righteousness of faith was imparted?"[5] The Hebraic covenant was a covenant of grace since it had as its foundation the mediating work of the heavenly Christ. Calvin quotes Paul: "They ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink."[6] Calvin is insistent in his claim that Christ was active among the Hebrews. For instance, in his discussion of the angels who ministered to Abraham, Calvin comments that "Christ, who is the living image of the Father, often appeared to the fathers under the form of an angel." And again: "Whenever he manifested himself to the fathers, Christ was the mediator between him and them; who not only personates God in proclaiming his word, but is also truly and essentially God."[7]

The spirituality of the Hebraic covenant, which brings about its unity with the new covenant, is clearly expressed in the covenant formula: "I will be your God, and you shall be my people." To experience the presence of God is to possess life and the hope of immortality. If God grants mercy to the living, how much more will he grant mercy to the faithful who have died. After discussing the

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lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Calvin remarks: "It is clearly established that in all their efforts in this life they set before themselves the blessedness of the future life."[8] Calvin thus stresses the eschatological aspect of the Hebraic covenant promises, while minimizing the patriarchs' hope in the present life, in order to demonstrate the unity of the old and new covenants. Whatever catastrophic events the Hebrew saints endured, they knew that "their final end was to be life and salvation, while the way of the wicked is a pleasant felicity by which they gradually slip into the whirlpool of death."[9] In the Institutes, Calvin writes, in concluding his discussion of the old and new covenants:

> Let us, therefore, boldly establish a principle unassailable by any stratagems of the devil: the Old Testament or Covenant that the Lord had made with the Israelites had not been limited to earthly things, but contained a promise of spiritual and eternal life. The expectation of this must have been impressed upon the hearts of all who truly consented to the covenant. But away with this insane and dangerous opinion--that the Lord promised the Jews, or that they sought for themselves, nothing but a full belly, delights of the flesh, flourishing wealth, outward power, fruitfulness of offspring, and whatever the natural man prizes! Christ the Lord promises to his followers today no other 'kingdom of Heaven' than that in which they may sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.[10]

Therefore, the work of Christ on the cross obtaining eternal salvation "pertains to believers of the Old Testament as much as to ourselves."[11]

In support of his argumentative discussion of the unity of the two covenants, Calvin recognizes that there exist some important differences between the two, but these differences center in the manner of dispensation of the covenants, rather than in their substance, and hence their unity is unimpaired.

The first difference consists in the fact that since the Hebraic mind was spiritually infantile, God saw fit to entice the people with earthly benefits, in hopes that these blessings would elevate their minds toward the hope of immortality. Possession of the land of Canaan was to function as a mirror of the future spiritual inheritance. God was "determined to lead them by his own hand to the hope of heavenly things," and while the same heavenly inheritance was appointed for them as for the Christian, "they were not yet old enough to be able to enter upon it and manage it."[12] Calvin interprets the Abrahamic covenant as a covenant that promised heavenly benefits, while the promise of the land was attached to the compact as "a symbol of his benevolence and as a type of the heavenly inheritance."[13] Without this understanding, argues Calvin, the prophetic emphasis on the blessedness of the future age cannot be understood. Such types and symbols can also be seen in God's punishment of the Hebrews, which prefigured eternal punishment. The difference between the two covenants does not involve substance, but only the manner of dispensation.

The second difference consists in the fact that truth was conveyed to the Hebrew through images and shadows, while known to the Christian more directly and intimately. In explaining this difference, Calvin returns to his earlier position that the Hebrews were too immature to embrace unveiled truth.[14] The wisdom that is now known to the Christian was in earlier times only dimly understood, even by the most perceptive Hebrew saint. Christ himself attests to this: "Many kings and prophets longed to see what you see, and did not see, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."[15]

The third difference involves the externality and literalness of the old covenant, whereas the new covenant is internal and spiritual. While the old covenant dealt with promises and rewards, the new deals with the regeneration of the heart. The Hebraic covenant brought death, the covenant of Christ brings life. The old was temporary, the new permanent. In short, the one covenant deals with the letter, the other with the spirit.

Closely related to the third difference is the fourth: the old covenant resulted in bondage because of the ever-present fear that man felt; the new covenant results in freedom, since trust and assurance are central to the Christian life. Any freedom and joy that was experienced

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by the Hebrew resulted from the comfort that he drew from the gospel known even then, rather than the law. But in spite of this comfort, fear and bondage could not be dismissed. Due to the work of the incarnate Christ, the Christian is no longer under bondage, and hence in this way the new covenant is different from the covenant of Moses.

The fifth and final difference involves the fact that the old covenant had reference to one nation, whereas the new covenant has reference to all nations: "Israel was then the Lord's darling son; and others were strangers . . . 'but when the fullness of time came' which was appointed for the restoration of all things, he was revealed as the reconciler of God and men; 'the wall' that for so long had confined God's mercy within the boundaries of Israel 'was broken down.'"[16] The difference between Jew and Gentile collapsed in the coming of Christ.

After explaining these differences, Calvin seeks to answer the charge that God must act inconsistently, since the covenant appears to have been changed. Calvin replies "that God ought not to be considered changeable merely because he accommodated diverse forms to different ages, as he knew would be expedient for each."[17] The old covenant was suited to the spiritual level of development of the Hebrews, and hence one must conclude that God acted wisely and justly, not for his sake, but for the sake of sinful man. While these differences may seem pronounced, Calvin wishes to contend that the similarities and unity of the two covenants far outweigh the dissimilarities. The differences center in the way in which the covenant was granted, rather than in the substance of the promises. The most fundamental position of Calvin is that "the covenant made with all the patriarchs is so much like ours in substance and reality that the two are actually one and the same."[18] By assuming this position, Calvin was departing from the thought of Luther and the (Non-Revolutionary) Anabaptists, while siding with Zwingli. In arguing against the Anabaptists, Zwingli expressed the belief that New Testament baptism was parallel to Old Testament circumcision, while his opponents attacked infant baptism, thereby implying the inferiority of the covenant granted to Abraham, which through circumcision accepted infants into the community of believers. The Anabaptists, and Luther with them, argued for the superiority of the new covenant. While the Anabaptists contrasted circumcision and baptism, Zwingli affirmed their similarity, claiming that God has made only one covenant in the history of salvation. Therefore the faith of the Christian is in content essentially identical to the faith of Abraham. Calvin echoes this argument.

Zwingli and Calvin's emphasis on one covenant in the history of salvation involves a major break with medieval theology, where the incarnation, and subsequent death and resurrection of Christ was held as the central event in salvation history. As noted, the work of Christ is not confined to the period of his incarnation. Calvin states that "God cannot without the mediator be propitious toward the human race."[19] Therefore the original adoption of the chosen people depended upon the grace of Christ. The granting of the covenant to Abraham is considered to be the primary as well as the first event in the history of salvation. Calvin's praise of Abraham is extensive: "We ought to esteem Abraham as one equal to a hundred thousand if we consider his faith, which is set before us as the best model of believing; to be children of God, we must be reckoned as members of his tribe."[20] In granting the covenant to Abraham, God stated that all nations would be blessed through His servant Abraham, because the incarnate Christ was included in his line. Abraham is not only an example of the faithful man, but also a cause of blessing.[21] Calvin comments on the promise to Abraham that he would be a father of many nations: "[Moses] so extends the name of father, as to make it applicable to the whole world, in order that the Gentiles, in other respects strangers, and separated from each other, might, from all sides, combine in one family of Abraham."[22] Abraham was not called the father of many nations because his descendants would grow into many nations, but because many nations would come to confess his faith.

Calvin argues for several degrees of adoption. In the first degree, the promises made to Abraham had as their recipients the Hebrews, in that "all Israelites were of the household of the Church, sons of God, and heirs of eternal life."[23] From among the nations of the world, God chose Israel, not because of any merit among the people, but out of his own free will. The second degree of election consists in a refinement of the general election. While all Hebrews were part of the church, "in the innermost sanctuary of God none others are reckoned the sons of God than they in whom the promise is ratified by faith . . . we therefore distinguish the true from the spurious children, by the respective marks of faith and unbelief."[24] Thus one finds in scripture the election of Jacob and the reprobation of Esau. Not all those with whom God had made a covenant received the Spirit of regeneration so that they could persevere in the covenant to the end. Included in this second stage of adoption are all individuals elected to salvation. Thus Calvin is concerned with the Gentiles, who are made equal to the natural descendants of Abraham upon becoming a part of the covenant community, through the work of Christ. The history of salvation involves the inverting of the original order: those who were once separated from

Abraham's seed now own the covenant, while "at length the Jews were cast out . . . in order that the rest might be saved."[25]

Both degrees of election are manifested in God's offering of the covenant. Covenant blessings come through the nation Israel, but each individual elected to salvation discovers that the covenant promise of salvation is for him. In interpreting this position, B. C. Milner writes: "That is what Calvin means when he says that the particular election is not only offered--that would be the general election--but also assigned."[26]

Because of his conviction that in the history of salvation there is in reality only one covenant, Calvin can refer to the Abrahamic covenant as being "eternal and without end." Yet Calvin also wishes to say that "the regular succession of ages was partly broken, and partly changed, by the coming of Christ, because the middle wall being broken down, and the sons by nature being, at length, disinherited, Abraham began to have a race associated with himself, from all regions of the world."[27] The incarnate Christ thus brings forth a major change in the history of salvation; yet his work is really one of renovating and renewing the original covenant, and Abraham remains the father of all believers. In fact, the original covenant was renewed several times before Christ's advent due to the obstinacy of the people. In his commentary on the Mosaic covenant, Calvin remarks that God was "confirming the covenant which he had made with Abraham."[28] During the period of kingship, after the chosen people had continually departed from the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants, "God applied a remedy to their iniquity, by raising up a new condition of things under David, to whom this promise is repeated."[29] The "new condition of things" must be understood as a renewal of the original covenant, directed toward gratuitously offering the people a clearer perception of the blessings that can await the faithful. When the people continued to sin, God spoke through the prophets in a special way, allowing them to declare that the ultimate and perfect restoration of the covenant would one day occur. Despite the iniquity of the Jews, which reaches its climax in the rejection of Christ, God remained faithful to his promise, and once the Jews failed to retain their right of primogeniture, God called the Gentiles into the family of Abraham, so as to have a place among his legitimate sons.[30]

Thus the advent of Christ does not abolish the old promises; rather, he is their confirmation. The new covenant is the renewal and renovation of the old covenant. There is then in Calvin's thought the notion of a single covenant, of which Christ is the mediator. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to exploring in more detail the history of this covenant, allowing the reader to penetrate into the dynamics of Calvin's covenant theology.

II. The Abrahamic Covenant

In granting the covenant to Abraham, God made the first move in the history of salvation. From Calvin's perspective, this event was momentous; God separated from the world a people to whom he offered eternal happiness. The Jews are "the first and natural heirs of the gospel . . . the first born in God's household," but because of their obstinacy and covenant-breaking the mantle has been transferred to the Gentiles.[31] Now the faithful from all nations can acknowledge Abraham as their father. The Christian must learn that the beginning of his vocation resulted from the faith of Abraham. The Abrahamic covenant involved the first degree of election, in which God chose to create his church from among the Hebrews. But one must keep in mind Calvin's teaching that with Christ's renovation of the covenant, Gentiles are invited into the church, and Abraham has become their father.

The central promise associated with the covenant is the hope of eternal salvation. God promises: "I shall be your God and the God of your descendants after you." Calvin writes:

> Those whom God adopts to himself, from among a people--seing that he makes them partakers of his

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> righteousness and of all good things--he constitutes heirs of celestial life. Let us then mark this as the principal part of the covenant, that He who is the God of the living, not of the dead, promises to be a God to the children of Abraham.[32]

Just as light emerged out of darkness in the creation of the world, so now the Hebrews are chosen from the nations to receive God's blessings. Since this action depended entirely on the grace of God, gratuitous adoption belonged to the whole people, who were now of the household of God. Eternal salvation was offered to all. In the Abrahamic covenant, a pattern was set: "Not only does the origin of our salvation flow from gratuitous adoption, but its continual progress even to the end can only be accomplished by God's freely reconciling us to himself."[33] The promise of the gift of the land is secondary to the covenant, and functions as a shadow of the heavenly blessings so as to entice the Hebrews to assume a life of obedience.

The Abrahamic covenant is clearly a covenant of grace rather than merit. It is an "axiom" that every promise of God made to the faithful stems from the free mercy of God, and gives evidence to his paternal love. Abraham did nothing to prompt this activity. Therefore Abraham was justified by faith, rather than works.[34] Faith is not the "efficient" cause of righteousness, but rather the "formal" cause. Abraham's faith was accepted by God in place of actual righteousness. But one must also remember that Abraham was justified by faith many years after he had first been called by God, after he had left his country at God's bidding, after practicing patience and continence, and after he had dedicated himself to holiness. Hence the granting of righteousness by imputation cannot be restricted to "a moment of time, so that he who at the first obtained justification by faith, may afterwards be justified by good works."[35] For if one accepts this position, then faith is regarded as only the beginning of righteousness, while righteousness itself involves a life-time of good works. The story of Abraham teaches the believer otherwise: one cannot substitute righteousness of works for righteousness of faith. "Holy men are only justified by faith, as long as they live in the world."[36] Therefore one is justified through a continuous and persevering faith. Calvin admits that after one has been born again by the Spirit of God, as Abraham was, the method of justifying differs to a degree, for God now embraces the believer with his gifts. But even these gifts are justified by gratuitous imputation, for some evil remains even in them. This example of the most saintly of believers teaches that men are justified before God by believing not by working. Men obtain grace by faith, because they are unable to deserve a reward by works. Hence the circumcision of Abraham, the sign of the covenant, came after his justification, and therefore was not its cause. The import of this discussion is that God freely called Abraham and offered to him and his posterity eternal salvation; Abraham was justified because he believed the Father, not because of personal merit. The clue to Abraham's spiritual success is that he believed in the promise, and from this belief he gained courage for a life of obedience.

According to Calvin's exegesis, the covenant granted to Abraham and his posterity had two points: the first, as discussed above, involved God's declaration of gratuitous love, and the promise of eternal happiness; the second consisted in an exhortation, encouraging Abraham to cultivate a holy and disciplined life.[37] In response to his gracious activity, God requires a just and obedient believer. After God told Abraham "I will make my covenant between me and you . . . ," Abraham fell on his face, and through this act of prostration Abraham promised obedience. Thus "the gratuitous adoption in which our salvation is placed, is to be combined with newness of life."[38] Abraham is the model of the obedient servant. Just as Abraham responded to God's call without hesitation, so the Christian's life will also be rightly constituted only when he depends upon God's word and follows his command. This is not only true in regard to individual actions, but with one's divine vocation itself.

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Such is the life of self-renunciation, in which the believer lives and dies to God alone. Thus an important aspect of the covenant involved the divine demand for a life of total obedience for Abraham and his descendants, allowing them to pass into eternal salvation.

Just as the new covenant contains sacraments, so did the old. While ancient covenants between kings and citizenry were engraven in brass or sculptured on stones so that the memory of them would not fade, God inscribed his covenant in the flesh of Abraham, for "circumcision was as a solemn memorial that adoption, by which the family of Abraham had been elected to be the peculiar people of God."[39] The purpose of a sacrament is "to help, promote and confirm faith," serving as a visible word, or sculpture and image of the grace of God. If one should ask why the great mystery of God's gratuitous love should consist in the mutilation of the flesh, the answer is that "it was necessary for Abraham to become a fool, in order to prove himself obedient to God; so whoever is wise, will both soberly and reverently receive what God seems to us foolishly to have commanded."[40] Yet there is an analogy between the visible sign and that which is signified. God commanded circumcision for two reasons: to demonstrate that what is born of man is polluted, and that salvation would proceed from Abraham's seed.

Since the coming of the new covenant, baptism has replaced circumcision as the mode of confirmation. The same promise given to the patriarchs in circumcision is given to the Christian in baptism. Both sacraments represent the forgiveness of sins and the mortification of the flesh. Just as the Jews entered into the church through circumcision, since it was a "token to them by which they were assured of adoption as the people and household of God, we also are consecrated to God through baptism, to be reckoned as his people."[41] Both sacraments result in obedience.

Thus according to Calvin, the Abrahamic covenant is the only covenant in the history of salvation, although it needed to be renewed and renovated due to the obstinacy of God's people. The Abrahamic covenant involved the gracious means by which God implements his general election of Israel and his special election of individuals. It is a covenant of grace and not merit, and it is to lead to a life of renunciation and obedience. The promise of salvation and eternal happiness promised to Abraham is the same promise extended to the Christian through the renewal of the covenant by Christ.[42] The Abrahamic covenant remains firm and steadfast, and "applies no less today to the children of Christians than under the Old Testament it pertained to the infants of the Jews."[43] The only real difference between the Abrahamic covenant and the new covenant deals with the mode of confirmation: circumcision and baptism. But the content of the covenants is the same, "otherwise, if the testimony by which the Jews were assured of the salvation of their posterity is taken away from us, Christ's coming would have the effect of making God's grace more obscure and less attested for us than it had previously been for the Jews."[44] The fulfillment and truth of baptism is also the fulfillment and truth of circumcision, since the same thing is signified: God's loving kindness to the believer. For this reason Abraham is the father of the Gentiles as well as the Jews, and is the perfect model of the faithful and obedient believer.

III. The Mosaic Covenant

The chief event leading to the covenant ceremony at Mt. Sinai and the gift of the law, was the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage. Calvin views the period of bondage as a type of spiritual captivity, in which man is held bound until the Heavenly Vindicator rescues him from despair to lead him to eternal haqpiness. The motivation for God's gratuitous activity is beyond question: "God heard their moaning, because he remembered his covenant."[45] Calvin states that it is clear from Deuteronomy 7:8 that God had not begun to love the Hebrews during the Mosaic period; rather, his love was felt from the moment when he had adopted Abraham and extended to him the promise of salvation. Since the time of Abraham, the covenant was handed down to each generation because God was faithful to his promise, not because of merit on the part of the people. The deliverance from Egypt was a testimony to his grace.

The renewal of the Abrahamic covenant through Moses was necessary because the carelessness of the people had resulted in its disregard. The Abrahamic covenant was "eternal and inviolable," but now the time had come for its renewal, to call the people once again to an awareness of its significance.[46] The rule of a "just and pious life" was known to the patriarchs, but in order that it would never sink into oblivion God set forth to renew it, this time engraving what God demands on tables of stone. The granting of the law resulted in the covenant ceremony recorded in Exodus 24. According to Calvin, Moses was aware of the fact that there was nothing in the behavior of the people to bring about this new act of mercy, for "there was no other reason why God should choose them, except His mere choice of them . . . . It follows, therefore, that the Israelites could never be sufficiently grateful to God, since they had been thus liberally dealt with by him, without any desert of their own."[47]

When discussing Mosaic law, Calvin is referring to ceremonial law (supporting the religion of Moses), political law (the civil and judicial law of Israel), and moral law (as summarized in the Decalogue). The law sought to kindle a desire for Christ, which means that the law would continually remind the people of the covenant promises made to Abraham. Benjamin C. Milner, Jr. writes that according to Calvin's teaching "Christ permeates the law." Calvin identifies Christ with the law "up to the point of identity," while at the same time thinking of Christ "as the inner, and hidden, essence of the law."[48] This identification would be as true in regard to the rules governing the sacrificial system as it is with the Ten Commandments: "God did not command sacrifices in order to busy his worshippers with earthly exercises. Rather, he did so that he might lift their minds higher."[49] The law was intended to be a mirror of Christ; they could not know Christ intimately since they were like children who could not "bear the full knowledge of heavenly things." But Christ is the soul of the law, and by faithful observance of the law the Jews could pass into spiritual adulthood, at which time the covenant promises would be fulfilled. Yet it must be remembered, as Milner states, that the law "is truly obeyed . . . only when it is obeyed inwardly, in the power of the Spirit, and that happens only when the Spirit, at the same time discloses the presence of Christ in the law."[50]

The mutuality of the Hebraic covenant becomes clearer in its Mosaic renewal. The continual offering of the covenant is a unilateral act, yet "inasmuch as mutual consent is required in all compacts, so, when God invites His people to receive grace, he stipulates that they should give him the obedience of faith, so as to answer, Amen."[51] Thus the covenant ceremony, following the gift of the law, contains the pledge of the people that they will do all that God commands. In voluntarily offering themselves to keep the covenant, the elect of God were embracing by faith the substance and truth of the shadows contained in the law. This pledge is motivated by their gratitude for God's gracious saving activity, particularly the deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Therefore Moses

> commends the law by reminding them of their redemption, [so] that the people might more willingly and more earnestly reverence it; for its authority has stronger claims upon them, because it was not imposed before God had laid them under obligation to himself; and it would have been too base and absurd in them to refuse God as their lawgiver, when they knew that by him they had been purchased to himself.[52]

God required a reciprocal love, which would be demonstrated by a life of obedience to the law. Failing to do this would involve the sin of ingratitude. Thus Moses seeks to make his fellow-Israelites submissive to God, and informs them that the motivation for this life of obedience stems from the fact that God had chosen them from among the nations of the world. Calvin states:

> The conclusion is, that since God had chosen them as His people, and by an external sign had devoted them to the cultivation of holiness, they ought sincerely and really to prove that they differed from heathen nations, and that they were circumcised in spirit no less than in the flesh.[53]

Not only are there bilateral elements in the covenant, in that "mutual consent is required of all compacts,"[54] but one notices also that the covenant is in some respects conditional; God's promises can be fulfilled only as the people remain faithful. Calvin writes that "although the law is a testimony of God's gratuitous adoption, and teaches that salvation is based upon His mercy, and invites men to call upon God with sure confidence, yet it has this peculiar property, that it covenants conditionally."[55] Calvin subscribes to the Deuteronomic historians doctrine of the "two ways": the people would be blessed if they obediently applied themselves to the keeping of the law, and cursed if they neglected the law in order to please the desires of the flesh. Thus blessings and curses are included in the covenant renewal ceremony: ". . . the doctrine which [Moses] had hitherto delivered is sealed by hope and fear, since they would not lose their labour if they obeyed it, nor be unpunished if they rejected it."[56]

In regard to the promises, Calvin argues that God could have in his own right simply required what he pleased, but because of his loving kindness he sought to entice the people with the hope of reward. Unless men are so attracted, they will be slow in assuming a diligent life. Therefore, God voluntarily promised that their work would be rewarded. This is not to say that if the law is kept, God is then under obligation to man. For even if the law is kept entirely, man deserves nothing since God has claimed for himself man's entire services. Calvin is consistent in arguing that the reward of good works does not depend upon their merit, but only upon God's covenant, in which the grace of Christ makes possible obedient living that is pleasing to God. The fact that reward is promised is another evidence of God's great mercy.[57]

The promise of reward involves both earthly and eternal blessings. According to Leviticus 26, God not only promises that "if you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield their fruit," but also that "I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people." In regard to the earthly blessings, just as the grace of God was represented to the Hebrews by shadows and images, for instance in the circumcision, so the same principle also applies to earthly reward. The prosperity of the land was intended as a shadow of heavenly reward. Yet Calvin insists that the primary aspect of the promises was spiritual rather than material: ". . . there is no doubt but that he lifts their thought above the world when he promises that he would be their God; for this expression, 'I will be your God,' contains, as Christ interprets it, the hope of eternal immortality. . . ."[58] The Hebrews were chosen to be a holy people "not only in order that, being well fed and with a full belly, they should aspire to nothing but earthly things, but that they might be confidently assured that they would be blessed in death as well as life."[59] Their sanctification would be "firm and perpetual" if they followed the law, thereby attaining heavenly immortality. Therefore, the hope of eternal life is granted to all who keep the law, and this is the central thrust of the promises. From this perspective it can now be seen what scripture means when it teaches that if a man fulfills the law he attains to righteousness.

But it must also be observed that salvation cannot be expected from the law unless its precepts can be completely complied with, "for life is not promised to one who shall have done this thing, or that thing, but by the plural word ['you shall keep my statutes and my ordinances'], full obedience is required of us."[60] If the law is not kept, thereby breaking the covenant agreement, then punishment will follow: "If you will not hearken to me, and will not do all these commandments . . . I will do this to you: I will set my face against you and you shall be smitten before your enemies; those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you."[61] But again, such earthly punishment is a shadow of the eternal condition of being cut off from God. This is the real curse associated with the law: if the law is not kept the covenant is broken and the people are eternally damned.

The ensuing history of the Hebrews makes it clear that no one is capable of keeping the law: "If we search the remotest past, I say that none of the saints, clad in the body of death, has attained to that goal of love so as to love God 'with all his heart, all his mind, all his soul, and all his might."[62] When Paul writes that "cursed be every one who will not abide by all things written in the book of the law," he is saying that no one can so abide. Thus the law could not be fulfilled by the Hebrews, nor can it be fulfilled by any man at the present time.[63] Even the most perfect man, who has been ever so diligent to keep the law, will have failed at some point or other. In such proclamations one sees Calvin's doctrine of original sin, in which he boldly states that the corruption of man is so great that all of man's affections are repugnant to the law.

Since then no one can live up to the demands of the law, the promises become "ineffectual," since man fails to perform his part of the covenant agreement. Calvin writes:

> Because observance of the law is found in none of us, we are excluded from the promises of life, and fall back into the mere curse. I am telling not only what happens but what must happen. For since the teaching of the law is far above human capacity, a man may indeed view from afar the proffered promises, yet he cannot derive any benefit from them.[64]

For this reason, the law brings death, and the curses hang over man, even the individual who is ~~the~~ recipient of God's general election, with "inexorable harshness."

With such a position, Calvin was forced to acknowledge and answer those "rebellious questions" which ask what use there could be in prescribing laws that man is unable to fulfill. Was God simply mocking man when he gave the law to the ancient Hebrews? Calvin never really adequately answers such questions, contending instead that when these enemies of God "have disgorged all that their rabid dishonesty has dictated, their own conscience will always abundantly refute them; for they will be compelled to acknowledge that the law is just, and that, when they transgress it by voluntary impulse, they are deservedly condemned."[65] The doctrine of the law is pure; the problem lies in the corruption of the human heart, and man has only to blame himself for his failure to obey the law and to perform the service that man

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owes God. Thus, one function of the law is to drive man toward a recognition of his corruption and his inability to live up to the dictates of God. The giving of the law was a merciful act, for it provided a mirror by which man can look directly at himself, thereby gaining an honest view of his miserable situation, which is the condition necessary if one is to cry out for the mercy of God. Calvin states that the law

> warns, informs, convicts, and last condemns every man of his own unrighteousness. For man, blinded and drunk with self-love, must be compelled to know and to confess his own feebleness and impurity. If man is not clearly convinced of his own vanity, he is puffed up with insane confidence, in his own mental powers . . . . But as soon as he begins to compare his powers with the law, he has something to diminish his bravado . . . . Thus man schooled in the law, sloughs off the arrogance that previously blinded him.[66]

When God gave the law to Moses to publish it among the people, attaching to it blessings and curses, God sought to direct the people toward acknowledging their dependence on him for salvation, by making them realize that they were unable to do what he demands. This is the pedagogical function of the law, which drives the person to despair, forcing the individual to look into the abyss of eternal damnation. The result would be that the members of the covenant of grace would fly for refuge to God's mercy and, being convinced of their sinfulness, they would implore the aid of the Holy Spirit, which in their smugness they had neglected. The people would seek in Christ what they mistakenly supposed could be found in themselves. Once this is done and the people "confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery which they committed against me . . . then I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham."[67] At this point the implementation of God's particular election of some individuals can begin. Calvin writes:

> It is plain that God, out of regard to his gratuitous adoption, will be gracious to the unworthy whom he has elected, and whence also it comes to pass, that, provided we do not close the gate of hope against ourselves, God will still come forward to reconcile us to Himself, if only we lay hold of the covenant from which we have fallen by our own guilt, like ship-wrecked sailors seizing a plank to carry them safe to port.[68]

The law thus works wrath as well as life. Freedom from anxiety and God's wrath can be found only in the gospel, and the Hebrews (like Christians) were taught by the law not to seek for salvation anywhere but in the grace of Christ. Their responsibility was to trust in the original Abrahamic covenant, which had been renewed by Israel at Mt. Sinai. This is why the prophet Hosea writes "I will say to them that are not my people, thou art my people."[69]

It is important to understand that the original granting of the covenant stemmed from divine initiative, without consideration for human merit. The covenant throughout its entire history remains inviolable, in spite of the sins of the people. While failure to live up to the covenant agreement results in death, genuine repentance, which does not happen to all, guarantees that God will respond. This is one aspect of the unconditional element of the covenant, which can be seen in the episode of the golden calf, which occurred a short time after the covenant ceremony. By violating the first commandment, the people broke the covenant, and were forced to endure the punishment of God. Yet after this event, God tells them, according to Calvin's interpretation of Exodus 32, "that the covenant of God was not altogether annulled, but only as it were interrupted, until the people had heartily repented."[70] Calvin refers to the golden calf incident as a "temporary rupture" of the covenant, without impairing its inviolability. Later, when God was forced to live up to his curses and removed the people from Palestine, "as if he had utterly renounced them, yet his grace and truth never failed; so that he at least had some hidden root from which the Church sprang up anew . . ."[71] For this reason Moses continually reminded the people that after they had sinned and were afflicted by the curses of God,

> if they sought after him, they should find him: and further, he gives them grounds for hope both in God's nature and in his covenant. He assures them that God will be willing to be appeased, because he is by nature merciful; but he adds another confirmation of this, which is more certain and familiar, viz., because God had adopted them by a perpetual covenant.[72]

God is forced to repudiate the people's sin, to act harshly, so that they will be driven to anxiety and despair, and thereby ask for pardon and cling to God's promises.

In summary of this section, the following points can be made: (1) the Mosaic covenant ceremony was necessary because the people had forgotten the Abrahamic covenant; (2) there was nothing that the people did to deserve this gracious act; it sprang from the very goodness of God's being; (3) the law contains curses and blessings, thereby indicating that fulfillment of the promises is conditional. The curses and blessings pertain more to spiritual than to material realities; (4) Calvin develops the pedagogical or religious purpose of the law, which contends that since no one is capable of fulfilling the law, it drives one to despair, thereby allowing the individual to recognize his dependence on God's mercy; (5) the covenant remains inviolable, in spite of the people's sin. The Old Testament believer as well as the Christian thrives on this hope.

To this discussion of the pedagogical function of the law, a further point should be added. According to Calvin, the moral law of the Old Testament functions in two additional ways: as the foundation of all civil law, and as a guide for the regenerate. The next chapter will contain a discussion of Calvin's understanding of the role of law in the life of the Christian. For now it is sufficient to note that Calvin maintains that the Christian life cannot be lived without the guidance of the moral law. Alongside the Holy Spirit, the law is an image-making instrument, providing for the regulation of the moral life of man. Thus the law not only forces the individual to acknowledge his sinfulness; it also functions to guide the Christian in his regenerate life. The conditional element in the covenant refers to that which is required on the part of man. To know what is required one must go to the moral law of the Old Testament. Therefore, in the life of the regenerate the law helps to mold the individual into the obedient believer.

IV. The Davidic Covenant

The history of the Hebrews from Moses till the period of united kingship under David, contains a continuous story of the people failing to live up to their covenant commitments. This was true in spite of the fact that God fulfilled the material side of his covenant promises: the people were given land. Most frequently the people violated the first two commandments, succumbing to their base instincts and worshipping pagan gods. Yet God's covenant promises remained; at times he sought to win the people back by fatherly chastisements, so much so that to the small group of faithful ones it appeared as if he had totally withdrawn the covenant. But this God did not do, and the clearest and most persuasive evidence for this can be found in the renewal of the ancient covenant through David, and in the prosperity granted to the Davidic kingdom.

One record of the content of this second major renewal of the Abrahamic covenant can be found in the seventh chapter of II Samuel:

> When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your son after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of this kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. When he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men; but I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.

The covenant was not annulled, for when God chose Jerusalem, "the people were in a manner renewed . . . they were recovered to the favour of God from which they had fallen."[73] Calvin refers to this event as the "second restitution" of the covenant. As with the Mosaic renewal, and the Abrahamic covenant itself, the Davidic covenant was based entirely on the gracious activity of God. Neither David nor the people did anything to deserve this kindness. God lives up to his covenant promises, and the renewal is another attempt to divert the people from the path that leads to eternal catastrophe. At the same time, the Davidic period is viewed by Calvin as the fulfillment of the material promises made to Abraham and Moses.[74] But, as previously indicated, Calvin views the Abrahamic covenant and its renewals as being essentially concerned with spiritual promises. If any one doubts this in regard to the covenant's earlier formulations, this doubt will be removed by studying the Davidic covenant, for in it "eternal life and Christ's kingdom are revealed in fullest splendor."[75] The Psalms of David demonstrate that he knew there was nothing solid or stable on earth, preferring to hold fast to the happiness that reposes in the covenant promises.

At the heart of the Davidic covenant is the promise that the kingdom of David will always endure. Commenting on Psalm 89:28, "I will establish his line forever, and his throne as the days of heaven," Calvin writes: "There being nothing under heaven of long continuance, 'days of heaven' is an expression employed to denote everlasting duration."[76] As stated in Psalm 132 this promise had been ratified by oath, and the promise involved a continuous line of successors. Calvin writes that

> this arrangement affected the welfare of the whole church, and not of David only, and the people of God are encouraged by the assurance, that the kingdom which he had established amongst them was possessed of a sacred and enduring stability. Both king and people needed to be reminded of this divine foundation upon which it rested.[77]

The promise is as stable as the course of the stars in the heavens, eternal and exempt from all change. From Psalm 89

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the reader learns that two extraordinary titles are applied to David: he is God's "chosen" and his "servant." He is called "chosen" to indicate that he received this enormous blessing because of God's good pleasure, and for no other cause. He is called "servant" because of the blessings that come to pass through him, for

> God did not enter into [the covenant] with David individually, but had an eye to the whole body of the Church, which would exist from age to age . . . . In ordaining one man to be king, God assuredly did not have a respect to one house alone, while he forgot and neglected the people with whom he had before made his covenant in the person of Abraham; but he conferred the sovereign power upon David and his children, that they might rule for the common good of all the rest, until the throne might be truly established by the advent of Christ.[78]

Another aspect of the promises associated with the Davidic covenant involves the conviction that even though the descendants of David would violate covenant law and fall into sin, God had promised to show himself merciful towards them, and that he would not punish their transgressions to the full extent of their desert. A remedy for such cases could be found in God's pardoning grace. God does not promise that he will allow them to escape unpunished, which would only encourage their sins, but instead vows "that in his chastisements he will exercise a fatherly moderation, and will not execute vengeance upon them to the full extent which their sins deserve."[79] To this statement Calvin adds a word of advice to the "enthusiasts" who dream that once one is grafted into the body of Christ, all corruption has been destroyed:

> Would to God that we could all of a sudden change our nature, and thus exhibit that angelic perfection which they require! But . . . as long as we carry about with us this tabernacle of the flesh, let us bid adieu to that devilish figment, and let us all betake ourselves to the sanctuary of forgiveness, which is at all times open for us. God . . . is speaking of the household of his church [in this Psalm]; and yet it is declared, with sufficient plainness, in the promise which he makes of pardoning their offenses, that they will transgress and be guilty of revolting from him.[80]

When those times of covenant transgression occurred, the prophets sought to remind the people of the Davidic pledge that pardoning grace would be offered, and that, furthermore, the promise regarding the Davidic kingship still held true. The prophet who wrote Psalm 89, after the period of united kingship came to an end, recognized that the promises to David were still being fulfilled when "amidst its first advances suddenly smitten with a grievous decay, its freshness and beauty were defaced, while at length it vanished away."[81] But this prophet does not accuse God of lying; rather, he reflects on the divine promises, and asks God to grant his pardoning grace. The prophets then taught the people to expect the reestablishment of the kingdom, thereby instilling assurance that the covenant would not be invalidated. The reality of this hope centered in the longawaited act of deliverance by the Messiah, that, as had been promised to David, "God would be through the hand of Christ the deliverer of the Church; and that his freely given covenant, whereby God had adopted his elect, would stand fast."[82] Thus, for example, when King Ahaz rejected the prophet Isaiah's advice that the siege of Jerusalem would end, Isaiah boldly states "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son."[83] Even though the kingdom collapsed and the people were forced into exile, the promise to David remained. David's descendants could be afflicted and chastized, but never eternally. The Lord was unwilling to destroy Judah because of the promise to David, for he had promised, according to II Kings 8, to "give a lamp to him and to his sons forever."

The real significance for Calvin of the life of David is that David is a "type of Christ." In the Psalms David is referred to as the "Son of God." Calvin recognizes that angels and kings who have been regenerated by the Spirit of adoption are called sons of God, "but David, when God promises to take him for his son is by singular prerogative, elevated above all others to whom this designation is applied." If one objects that David was after all mortal, the answer is that if one considers David in himself he cannot be elevated to this high position, but deserves it only because "for a time he represented the person of Christ."[84]

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Because David was a type of Christ, he stands far above the angels. When God graciously chose David, he came forth from the love as one who had been begotten of God. For Calvin, this was an event of great importance since Christ, who had been hidden from the beginning in the sacred bosom of the Father, and who afterwards had been shadowed in the law, was known to be the Son of God from the moment when he came forth with clear and evident marks of sonship. This was the "day which the Lord hath made," for the important role of Christ as mediator was now in focus. Calvin writes:

> In order to learn to apply to Christ whatever David, in times past, sang concerning himself, one must hold this principle, which we meet with everywhere in all the prophets, that he, with his posterity, was made king, not so much for his own sake as to be a type of the Redeemer.[85]

One important aspect of this can be seen in Calvin's commentary on Psalm 132:10. In this prayer by Solomon, the plea is made: "For thy servant David's sake do not turn away the face of thy anointed one." Solomon is asking that God grant this request for the sake of his servant David, because God had made a covenant with him.

> The prayer, in short, is to the effect that God in remembrance of his promise would show favour to the posterity of David, for though this prayer for the Church must be considered as dictated to each of the kings, the foundation was in the person of David. The Church was taught figuratively that Christ, as Mediator, would make intercession for all his people. As yet he had not appeared in the flesh, nor entered by the sacrifice of himself into the Holiest of all, and in the meantime the people

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> had a figurative Mediator to embolden them in their supplications.[86]

As a type of Christ, David functioned as Mediator. Calvin believes that the kingdom itself was erected to be a figure or shadow in which God could represent the Mediator to the community of believers. If one sets Christ aside, then one cannot give a satisfactory explanation of the everlasting duration of the royal throne. The perpetuity of the kingdom, in spite of its seemingly collapsed moments, can be verified in Christ alone.

Just as David is a type of Christ, so his kingdom is a type of Christ's kingdom. In Psalm 2:7b-8, one reads, "He said to me, 'you are my son, today I have begotten you. Ask of me and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.'" In interpreting these verses, Calvin stresses the fact that David did reign over a large territory, with many nations being forced to pay him tribute. Yet at the same time, it is clear that this prophecy could not have been fulfilled in him, for a comparison of his kingdom with other monarchies demonstrates the limitations of his rule. Hence, "unless we suppose this prophecy concerning the vast extent of kingdom to have been uttered in vain and falsely, we must apply it to Christ, who alone has subdued the whole world to himself, and embraced all lands and nations under his dominion."[87] But the important fact to note is that under the figure of David's temporal kingdom, there was described a government of excellent quality, on which the joy and courage of the community depended, and which directed the eyes of God's elect to the kingdom of Christ. Even after the captivity, the past reality of the Davidic kingdom, and the promises associated with it, provided images of Christ's kingdom, allowing the people to maintain their faith and hope. If one considers the true nature and end of David's kingdom, not content with the mere shadow, he will see the kingdom of Christ, for "it is plainly made manifest from all the prophets, that those things which David testified concerning his own kingdom are properly applicable to Christ."[88]

Just as Mosaic law was a revelatory improvement on the Abrahamic covenant, so Davidic kingship was a revelatory improvement on the Mosaic covenant. The intent of God is becoming increasingly clear, and alongside that, the knowledge of human sin. Through Moses and David, Christ was set before the eyes of the ancient folk as in a double mirror. From the tribe of Levi came a deepening perception of the Priesthood of Christ; from the posterity of David came the clear perception of the kingship of Christ. For this reason priesthood and sanctuary service were very important to David. Calvin states: "The true strength and stability of that kingdom were in Christ, and Christ's kingdom is inseparable from his priesthood."[89] God decreed nothing in relation to the kingdom, but what had a certain connection with the sanctuary, in order more perfectly to prefigure the Mediator who would one day come in the flesh, and who was both priest and king. According to Calvin, the immature nature of Hebrew spirituality made necessary the commencement of the kingdom of Christ according to types, and this is what the kingdom of David is.

As is evident from the preceding discussion, the same relationship between unconditionality and conditionality that was observed in the Mosaic covenant, is also present in the Davidic covenant. Calvin recognizes that the covenant is clearly unconditional in that it promises perpetuity of succession of the Davidic line; God would always have a descendant from David upon the throne, not merely for one age, but for ever. Yet at the same time, the kingdom was destroyed, the royal line interrupted. Does this indicate that continuation of the kingdom was dependent on human conduct? The answer to the question is no, if one is talking about the central aspect of the Davidic promise, the eternal reign of the Mediator who would take on the form of a servant, thus indicating that God's grace would always be offered. Calvin writes that the treachery and rebellion of the nation did not prevent God from sending forth his Son. God met the opposition of the Jews with a display of marvelous love, an action based without any consideration on the part of human merit.

Yet Calvin also wishes to affirm that the Davidic covenant, like the Mosaic covenant, is conditional, for there are accessories to the covenant, in which a condition was appended to the effect that God would bless them if they obeyed his commandments. Because of the conditional element in the covenant, the Jews lost the material kingdom and were forced into captivity. Calvin refers to this as a "kind of breaking of the covenant, but only in part and to appearance." On the one hand, the covenant is abolished; even during the period of Restoration, "there was no one bearing the name of king, and any dignity that attached to Zerubbabel was but obscure, till kings sprung up who were spurious, and not of the right line."[90] But from another perspective, the covenant was not broken, remaining everlasting and inviolable, in that the promise of Christ held true.

But it is important to observe that Calvin's use of conditional language does not involve a notion of free will. It is true that fulfillment of the covenantal promises occurs only where the individual has engaged in a life of faith and obedience. But faith and obedience are not a matter of human initiative; rather, they are only possible through divine intervention. Without God's grace the requirements of the covenant cannot be kept. Therefore, Calvin can argue that fulfillment of the covenantal promises occurs only where human behavior is successfully patterned after old covenant law, while maintaining at the same time that such behavior is possible only through God's gracious intervention. Thus the conditional language employed by Calvin functions to set forth the responsibility of the covenant member. But he who does not receive the regenerating power of the spirit cannot fulfill the covenant requirements. This indeed is the difference between God's general and particular election; only those individuals who are the beneficiaries of the latter election are able to live a life of faith and obedience.

In summary, the following points can be made in regard to the Davidic covenant: (1) the material promises granted to Moses were fulfilled during the reign of David and his son Solomon; (2) the Davidic covenant is the second major renewal of the Abrahamic covenant, promising that the kingdom of David would be established forever. If the people violate the covenant, they will be chastised, but not punished to the full extent of their desert; (3) when times of covenant transgression occurred, and the ensuing punishment resulted, the prophets sought to remind the people of the Davidic pledge that pardoning grace would be offered; (4) David functions as a type of Christ, thus directing the people toward the hope of salvation; (5) the Davidic kingdom was a type of Christ's kingdom, which provided images for the renewal of faith; (6) the motifs of unconditionality and conditionality, noted in regard to the Mosaic covenant, are continued in Calvin's interpretation of the Davidic covenant.

V. The New Covenant

At the center of Calvin's theology is the conviction that there is no salvation apart from the Mediator. We have observed the crucial role that Calvin gives Christ in granting and sustaining the old covenant. Apart from the work of Christ, "God never showed favor toward the ancient people, nor even gave hope of grace to them."[91] As Mediator, the Heavenly Christ was active in the original Abrahamic covenant, and then again, in increasingly more revealing ways, in the Mosaic and Davidic covenant renewals. Christ was continually presented to the Hebrews as the goal and fulfillment of their faith. Every important aspect of the old covenant offered the opportunity of directing the people's attention to the hidden yet partly visible Christ: the Levitical priests prefigured the priesthood of Christ; the kingship of David was a type of Christ's kingship. The faithful old covenant man understood that the promises associated with the covenant would be fulfilled only in Christ. Even when the people totally rejected their covenant responsibilities, so that God was obligated to live up to the curses associated with the Mosaic covenant and forced Israel and Judah into exile, the promise remained that God would make possible a definitive way of salvation through Christ.

Thus the essence of the Hebraic covenant, the law of Moses and the kingship of David, involved setting Christ before Israel. Paul is indeed correct, argues Calvin, that the law (which includes the Davidic kingdom) was a "tutor" until Christ came in the flesh. Since the Hebrews were like children, they were unable to bear the full knowledge of heavenly things. The incarnate Christ is the fulfillment of the law, and this is the promise which the law contains. The unfolding of the Hebraic covenant involved the increasing anticipation of the grace of Christ.

Old covenant law not only directed men toward Christ by the promise contained therein, but also by the curses that God associated with it. Complete observance of the law would count as perfect righteousness before God. But it becomes immediately clear through a study of Hebrew history, as well as through individual introspection, that total obedience of the law is impossible. For this reason "horrible threats hang over us, constraining and entangling not a few of us only, but all of us to a man. They hang over us, I say, and pursue us with inexorable harshness, so that we discern in the law only the most immediate death."[92] This indeed is the first use of the law: it teaches that man cannot keep the law, and thus one must turn to the grace of Christ. The Old Testament saints recognized this fact. David says: "Every man living will be unrighteous before thee," and Solomon declares that "there is no righteous man upon the earth who . . . does not sin." The pedagogical function of the law therefore removes all pride and the illusion of self-attained righteousness. Because the law functions in this way, it must be praised, for it allows one to measure the depth of his own sin, and this is the first requisite to relying on God's grace. The prophets understood this, and it was they who called upon the Hebrews to await the new covenant, in which the final and complete saving act of grace would be revealed through Christ. Jeremiah stated the formula of this covenant:

> Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.[93]

In expounding this passage from Jeremiah, Calvin states that the covenant inaugurated by Christ is not called "new" because it is contrary to the first covenant, "for God is never inconsistent with himself, nor is he unlike himself."[94] God did not change his purpose; the Abrahamic covenant is inviolable, the Mosaic and Davidic renewals are confirmation of that fact. The Christian's hope of salvation is derived only from the promise made to Abraham; Christians are his children because they are now the recipients of God's general (and for some special) election. For this reason it is wrong to think of the covenant as being a contrary or a different covenant, for "God has never made any other covenant than that which he made formerly with Abraham, and at length confirmed by the hand of Moses."[95]

Yet Christ's covenant can be called "new." The difference between this covenant and the Hebraic covenant has to do with "form" or "manner" rather than "substance." By substance, Calvin is referring to doctrine, to the Word of God itself, "for God in the gospel brings forward nothing but what the law contains." Calvin argues further that "God has so spoken from the beginning, that he has not changed, no not a syllable, with regard to the substance of the doctrine."[96] In the Hebraic covenant, God set forth in the law the rule of a perfect life of obedience, and set forth the way of salvation in the types and figures of the covenantal apparatus. The essence then of the new covenant is that the incarnation of Christ accomplished that which had been shadowed forth under the law. The new covenant "was made when Christ appeared with water and blood, and really fulfilled what God had exhibited under types, so that the faithful might have some taste of salvation."[97] The first difference in form then has to do with the fact that the preexistent and active mediator of the Hebraic covenant has become incarnate. God speaks more openly and shows himself more fully in the incarnate Christ than he did in the law. That is, God speaks to the Christian face to face, as it were, rather than through a veil. Moses, after he had been with God, was forced to put on a veil when he went to address the people. Paul says that under the new covenant the veil is removed, and God in the face of Christ presents himself to be seen by man.

The second difference in form involves the role of the Holy Spirit. Calvin states that the mere physical presence of Christ would not have been a significant factor, if regeneration by the Holy Spirit was not included in the new covenant. The extraordinary gift of the Spirit, which was experienced only in limited ways during the Hebraic period, means that God's doctrine not only sounds in the ear, but also penetrates into the heart. The Spirit works effectively in the believer, forming anew the affections, so that the Christian will not depart from God. The new covenant thus brings perseverance, for "the whole course of our life is directed by the Spirit of God, so that the end no less than the beginning of good works ought to be ascribed to his grace."[98] It is true that the faithful often stumble, yet they do not fail, for the Spirit within prompts the fallen believer to repent. The situation of the Christian is much better than that of the old covenant man, for

> though we halt, and also turn out of the right way, and our depraved lusts entice us to evil, and our corruption hinders us from running as we desire to do, yet our condition is far better, because God endures us amidst all our conflicts with the power of his own Spirit, so that we are never overcome or overwhelmed.[99]

The new covenant is thought of by Calvin as a renovation of the old covenant, and this can be seen more clearly in the fact that Christ is the fulfillment of the old covenant types. Christ performs the office of king and of priest. The exilic prophets, in order to foster hope in salvation, affirmed the Davidic covenant promise that "David shall never want a man to sit man upon the throne of the house of Israel." This prophetic statement sought to direct the attention of the people toward heavenly realities, for the temporal history of the Hebrew people proves that this proclamation was not directed toward material hopes. There was no throne, no crown, no true Davidic ruler after the exile. Ezekiel stated that an interruption of the kingdom was not contrary to this prophecy, for the crown would be cast down until the legitimate successor of David appeared. It was necessary for the people "to look forward to the king, to whom the diadem, or the royal crown, was to be restored." Thus Calvin states that "whenever the prophets declare that the kingdom of David would be perpetual, they do not promise that there would be a succession without interruption, but this ought to be referred to that perpetuity which was at length manifested in Christ alone."[100] Those things that were shadowed forth in David have been accomplished in Christ. While David's kingdom was of short duration, Christ's kingdom is eternal. It is eternal in that Christ reigns over the church, which cannot fall. In interpreting Psalm 110:1 Calvin writes that

> no matter how many strong enemies plot to overthrow the church, they do not have sufficient strength to prevail over God's immutable decree by which he appointed his son eternal King. Hence it follows that the devil, with all the resources of the world, can never destroy the church, founded as it is on the eternal throne of Christ.[101]

But Christ's kingdom is also eternal in that the true believer remains a part of it even after death. The happiness that is promised the Christian, like the old covenant man, does not consist in physical well-being or extensive possessions, but only in the heavenly life. Christ enriches his people "with all things necessary for the eternal salvation of souls and fortifies them with courage to stand unconquerable against the assaults of spiritual enemies."[102] It is at this point that the increasing role of the Holy Spirit becomes important, allowing the individual to be victorious over temptation, so that he remains a member of Christ's kingdom. Through all the tragedies of life the faithful have the assurance that "our king will never leave us destitute, but will provide for our needs until, our warfare ended, we are called to triumph."[103] David was anointed with oil; Christ was anointed with, according to Isaiah 11:2 "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might. . ." A symbol of this anointing occurred at the time of Christ's baptism, when the Spirit of God, in the form of a dove, descended on Christ. The Christian's spiritual invigoration stems from this very fountain of life. To say that Christ sits at the right hand of the Father is to confess that Christ is the Father's deputy, having possession of the power of God's dominion.

But Christ also fulfills a priestly office, and as such is the fulfillment of that old covenant type. Man's corrupt nature made it impossible for man to be reconciled to God, whose righteousness man cannot approach. In his role as Judge, God must sentence every man to spiritual death. But Christ as the Heavenly High Priest makes an expiation for man, so as to appease God's wrath: "The priestly office belongs to Christ alone because by the sacrifice of his death he blotted out our own guilt and made satisfaction for our sins."[104] Christ is the believer's everlasting intercessor. "Christ offered no calves, nor any incense, but fulfilled all these things which were then set forth to the [old covenant] people under symbols."[105]

It must be stressed again that Calvin affirms that the fathers who lived under the law had the same hope of immortality set before them as Christians do, since their faith rested on the same promise. Yet the form between the two covenants is different, "for though God promised to them the same salvation which he at this day promises to us, yet neither the manner nor the character of the revelation is the same or equal to what we enjoy."[106] Since the spiritual kingdom of Christ is the object of the new covenant promise, salvation now reaches "to the very heavens." According to the author of Hebrews, God in the past spoke to the fathers through prophets (Moses and David as well as the "major" and "minor" prophets), but now he speaks directly through his Son. The Christian's situation is superior to the fathers. "The diversity as to visions and other means adopted under the Old Testament, was an indication that it was not yet a fixed state of things, as when matters are put completely in order."[107] But Calvin is eager to soften the sharp blows directed against the old covenant. Particularly, Calvin finds it necessary to interpret in a revealing way Hebrews 8:7 "For if the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second." Calvin agrees that the old covenant situation was far from perfect. But from Calvin's perspective, he recognizes that one could say "that the people were at fault, and for this cause the new covenant was introduced as a remedy," and one could also argue that "it appears unjust, that if the blame was in the people it should be transferred to God's covenant."[108] Yet Calvin, in spite of his emphasis on the sins of the people as destroying the effectiveness of the old covenant, is also willing to say that the weakness of the covenant rested in the fact that it was external rather than internal, written on stones rather than in the heart. But Calvin does imply that if the people had been obedient, the old covenant would have sufficed. But since they were not, the Hebraic covenant needed renovating, and this led to the granting of the new covenant.

The essence of the new covenant consists in the following realities:

> the first regards the gratuitous remission of sins; and the other, the inward renovation of the heart; there is a third which depends on the second, that is the illumination of the mind as to the knowledge of god.[109]

We have noted that the first reality was fulfilled in the role of Christ as Priest, and the second in the role of Christ as King. The third factor is also important, and is indeed one of the realities that separate the new from the old covenant. The prophet Jeremiah states, as noted, that in the new covenant "no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest . . ." Calvin comments on this verse:

> Here is mentioned another difference between the old and the new covenant, even that God, who had obscurely manifested himself under the law, would send forth a fuller light, so that knowledge of him would be commonly enjoyed.[110]

But Calvin approaches with great caution the contention that under the new covenant no one would have need of a teacher or instructor, since every man would have adequate knowledge. Calvin criticizes the Spiritualists who have

> ignorantly and foolishly abused this passage, seeking to put down teaching of every kind . . . and say that dishonour is done to Christ, if we are still disciples, because it is written as one of the praises and encomiums given to the new covenant, that 'no one shall teach his neighbor anymore.'"[111]

Rather, this passage is only referring to the fact that Christ, since his coming, has unfolded the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, which is more abundant under the gospel than it was under the law. What Jeremiah really means is that the Christian is no longer in need of the first elements of faith, which is all that the old covenant man could comprehend. The Christian has the first principles of truth, but to say that he is without need of instruction is to deny the very intention of the gospel. Calvin quotes Isaiah 2:3: "come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord . . . that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." The new covenant has not replaced the role of teacher. The grace of regeneration involves the gift of knowledge, and

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just as the Christian must dedicate his life to the process of regeneration, so one must continually grow in the knowledge of God, and since Christians are not equal in knowledge, teachers are necessary.

In summary of this discussion of the new covenant up to this point, the following can be said: (1) the new covenant is "new" not because it is contrary to the old covenant, but because it differs from the old in "form" rather than "substance": Christ has become incarnate, more extensive regeneration is possible because of the Holy Spirit, and God now speaks more openly and shows himself more fully; (2) the new covenant is essentially a renovation of the old covenant, as seen in the fact that Christ fulfills the old covenant types, priest and king; (3) the essence of the new covenant consists in three realities: gratuitous remission of sins, inward renovation of the heart, and a more extensive knowledge of God.

In order to have sufficient background material for the study of Calvin's ethic, it is necessary at this point to examine more closely the relationship between law and gospel in Calvin's thought. As noted, Calvin emphasizes the close relationship between the old covenant and the new, between law and gospel. Calvin supports this contention by claiming that the promises associated with the old covenant are still in effect for the Christian. Writing against one of his enemies, Calvin states:

> We ought to beware of the devilish imagination of Servetus, who--while he wishes to extoll the greatness of Christ's grace or at least pretends to wish this--entirely abolishes the promises, as if they had ended at the same time as the law.[112]

Calvin disagrees with the concept that through faith in the gospel the believer shares in the fulfillment of all the covenantal promises. Such an attitude claims that there is no difference between the believer and Christ. The Christian does not yet possess the full and most important benefits that Christ has imparted. Calvin quotes I John 3:2, that while "we are the children of God, it does not yet appear . . . until we shall become like him, when we see him as he is." Christ has accomplished the work of salvation, yet the enjoyment of this lies hidden under the guardianship of hope, until, having put off corruptible flesh, the believer can be transfigured in the glory of Christ. The actual situation of the Christian has a close parallel to the situation of the Old Testament saint: he lives by hope. The advantage of the Christian is that he has a further dimension of the Holy Spirit to encourage him. Yet the Christian, like the old covenant faithful, relies on the promises: "We enjoy Christ only as we embrace Christ clad in his own promises as were given to the holy men of old."[113] The Christian has a clearer perception of the promises, since Christ became incarnate, while the Old Testament saint saw Christ only through shadows and figures. But the striking parallel remains. Commenting on Jeremiah 33:14, Calvin states that

> the true application of prophetic truth is, that we never lay hold on, and really embrace the promises of God, except we look forward to the 'days that are coming' . . . and further, except our faith leans on the promises, when they seem to lie dormant, it is not firm, and has no roots or foundations; for as the root which nourishes the tree is not seen, but lies hid in the earth, and as the foundation of a house is not visible to our eyes, so ought faith to be in like manner founded, and to drive deep roots into God's promises, so that its firmness may not be in the air, nor have a visible surface, but a hidden foundation.[114]

This is what Jeremiah told the people of the exile in order to encourage their faith, and this is what Calvin told the citizens of Geneva for the very same reason. Calvin goes on to state that Christ gives the Christian "some foretaste" of salvation; again one sees that the new covenant man is in a position that is not much different from the old covenant man. Victory lies in the future, rather than in the present, and the faithful disciple of Christ recognizes that this means that the struggle between flesh and spirit is never won while he is still earth-bound. As will be noted in the next chapter, one of the chief aspects of Calvin's ethic involves the principle of "mediation of the future life," which allows the believer to gain courage to continue the fight so that the eventual victory will be sure.

From this perspective Calvin is eager to "refute those who always erroneously compare the law with the gospel by contrasting the merit of works with the free imputation of righteousness."[115] Calvin agrees with Paul that differences between law and gospel are great, yet "the gospel did not so supplant the entire law as to bring forward a different way of salvation," and therefore Calvin seeks to soften the Pauline emphasis that the gospel has abrogated the law, so that the law is no longer of concern for believers. Calvin contends that Paul was forced to contrast law and gospel since there were those in the early church who misunderstood the relation between the two. In his commentary on the Pentateuch, Calvin states that there really is no opposition between law and gospel, "if their respective doctrine be dexterously applied to its proper object," for Christ and Moses perfectly accord in the substance of their doctrine.[116] One cannot separate Moses from Christ, and if one recognizes this then it can be seen that Moses "was the herald and witness of God's paternal kindness towards his people; [and] his doctrine contained promises of a true salvation and opened to the faithful the door of access to God."[117] Apart from Christ, Moses was nothing, and his law led only to death. But the promises granted to Moses concerning Christ are eternal, for God promised salvation to his ancient people, regenerated his chosen, and illuminated them by his Spirit.

The difference between the Mosaic age and the Christian age is that, since the coming of Christ, this regeneration is done more "freely and extensively."

In his attempt to stress the unity of law and gospel, Calvin does not slip into the position of arguing that one is justified by works, that is, through doing the law. Rather, the complementary nature of law and gospel stems from the opposite fact, that the Old Testament saint, like the New Testament believer, was justified by faith. Moses recognized that if one cleaved to the law, without the experience of faith, he was doomed for everlasting punishment. For this reason, the holy men of old fastened their eyes on the mercy of God and the hope of his future redemptive act. Therefore the Christian, like the faithful of old, must give up all hope of human merit in order to embrace the freedom that Christ brings. Christ did not bring a cleavage between law and gospel; rather, his work resulted in demonstrating their complementary nature, so that the old covenant and the new covenant are really one. The implications of this doctrine for the development of Calvin's ethic is far-reaching, as will be shown in the next chapter.

Calvin wishes to bring together divine initiative with human responsibility in his doctrine of the covenant. The motif of unconditionality is an expression of the former concern, while the motif of conditionality is an expression of the latter concern. But Calvin's emphasis on human responsibility in the covenantal relationship must be understood from his perspective that only the grace of God makes possible faith and obedience. Thus the concept of conditionality does not imply free will; rather, this motif attempts to describe the kind of obedient life the faithful Christian will live. But it can be argued that the conditional element in Calvin's thought hinges on the fact that the Christian does not yet possess the most important benefits earned by Christ, and hence the distance between God and man must be closed in this life through obedience, which is made possible by the faith experience. Inasmuch as the completion of salvation lies in the future, when the covenant promise as related to some Christians will be fulfilled, arriving at this goal depends on a life of radical obedience to God. This will be seen in the discussion to follow of Calvin's use of the third function of the law. Calvin seeks to protect the aseity of God and the reality of God's grace: election does not depend on human merit. This is why Calvin's employment of conditional language does not involve a notion of free will. Rather, the motif of conditionality means that successful regeneration, which occurs only in those individuals elected to salvation, is necessary if one is to receive the full blessings that

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Christ has brought. The motivating power of Calvin's ethic stems from the conditional accessories that are attached to the Abrahamic covenant, which according to Calvin, is the only covenant in the history of salvation. The conditional aspect of the covenant means that obedience is required, and, as will be pointed out more clearly in the next chapter, he who does not live a life of obedience to the law must conclude that he has not received the regenerating power of the Spirit, and that, therefore, his election to salvation is in doubt.

VI. General and Particular Election and God's Covenant of Grace

According to Calvin's theology, the covenant was the means by which God carried out his general election of Israel and his particular election of some individuals. The covenant as it applied to Israel was strongly conditional: if the Israelites had been able to live up to the demands of the law, the catastrophes that came upon them would not have occurred. But the people disobeyed the law, and the nation was lost. But the unconditional element of the covenant meant that God's promise of deliverance would be fulfilled. This deliverance occurred through Christ's renovation of the old covenant, which had the effect of allowing the Gentiles to enter into the church. The Christian, like the Hebrew, cannot live the kind of holy life demanded by the covenant, without the aid of the Holy Spirit. The advantage of the Christian is that the work of the Spirit is now more extensive and penetrating since the coming of Christ. But this does not mean that conditional elements no longer are attached to the covenant. The believer who enters into the Christian covenantal community must dedicate his life to obedient living of the law. In this regard, it is possible to refer to the following quotation from Calvin given in the first chapter:

> There is always to be presupposed a mutual relation and correspondence between the covenant of God and our faith, in order that the unfeigned consent of the latter may answer to the faithfulness of the former.[118]

Calvin also states that:

> Since God grants us liberty to come to him, we must at least be mutually bound to him, and he must take promise of us that we will be his people . . . that we will no longer live after our own lusts but be ruled by him. There must be this mutual bond between us, that since God binds himself so to us, we also must come and submit ourselves wholly to him.[119]

The conditional aspect of the covenant can be seen through an understanding of the relationship between general and particular election. It is important to realize that one may hold membership in the covenant of grace, while not having membership in the circle of the particular elect.[120] The first degree of election consisted in God choosing Israel to be the recipient of his grace;

the second degree of election involved a "more limited degree of election, or one in which God's more special grace was evident, that is, when from the grace of Abraham, God rejected some but showed that he kept others among his sons by cherishing them in the church."[121] Many who belonged to the general election were excluded from the particular election, with the consequence that numerous individuals failed to live up to their covenant obligations. But the doctrine of election does not lessen human responsibility for sin. Calvin writes:

> By their own defect and guilt, I admit, Ishmael, Esau, and the like were cut off from adoption. For the condition had been laid down that they should faithfully keep God's covenant, which they faithlessly violated.[122]

Thus, it is possible to belong to God's covenant of grace, and yet not receive the regenerating power of the Spirit so as to obtain salvation. Calvin states that

> where God has made a covenant of eternal life and calls any people to himself, a special mode of election is employed for a part of them, so that he does not with indiscriminate grace effectually elect all.[123]

Calvin goes on to write:

> It is easy to explain why the general election of a people is not always firm and effectual: to whose with whom God makes a covenant, he does not at once give the spirit of regeneration that would enable them to persevere in the covenant to the very end. Rather, the outward change, without the working of inner grace, which

> might have availed to keep them, is intermediate between the rejection of mankind and the election of a meager number of the godly.[124]

Thus, the covenant of grace is an intermediate stage or middle way between the rejection of mankind and the election of some. Hoekema writes that one "could say that covenant membership is here pictured as a circle wider than particular election, but narrower than mankind as a whole."[125] Not all covenant members attain salvation. Rather, only those who participate in the covenant obligations through faith and ensuing obedience can be considered the beneficiaries of God's particular election.[126]

The importance of this doctrine can be seen when Calvin elsewhere applies it to the life of the Christian, who is the beneficiary of Christ's renovation of the old covenant. In a sermon on Deuteronomy, Calvin states:

> But yet it is not sufficient that God has so chosen us as to put us into his house, that he holds us to be his flock, that he dwells in our midst; it is necessary that every one of us should have regard to himself, so that the gospel should not be preached in vain, so that we should not have just the title of being Christians without having the effect of it appear in us. For until our adoption has been sealed by the Holy Spirit, let us not think that it profits us anything to have heard the Word of God, but it [the Word] shall be for us a double condemnation--for, since God has chosen us but we have offended him, and since he has entered into a covenant with us, but we have broken the faith which we owe to him and have promised him, therefore we must be punished the more grievously.[127]

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Therefore it is possible for the Christian, like his Hebrew counterpart, to receive a lower degree of election, to experience something of the grace of God, and yet not receive the power of the Spirit sufficiently to attain salvation. Such an individual will fail to live up to his covenant commitments. The consent of faith and obedience is obligatory, and this does not happen to all.

One sees the practical application of this doctrine in Calvin's discussion of infant baptism. One must keep in mind Calvin's belief that Abraham is the father of Gentile believers as well as the Jews, since through Christ's renovation of the covenant the wall separating Jew and Gentile was broken. The circle to whom general election applied was expanded. In this transformation, the method of confirming the covenant changed from circumcision to baptism. Circumcision and baptism signify the same reality. Calvin states that

> We have, therefore, a spiritual promise given to the patriarchs in circumcision such as is given baptism, since it represented for them forgiveness of sins and mortification of flesh. Moreover, as we have taught that Christ is the foundation of baptism in whom both of these reside, so it is also evident that he is the foundation of circumcision. For he is promised to Abraham, and in him the blessings of all nations. To seal this grace, the sign of circumcision is added.[128]

Thus, the promise signified by circumcision and baptism is the same, "namely that of God's fatherly favor, or forgiveness of sins, and of eternal life."[129]

Furthermore, circumcision served as the first entry into the church, God's covenantal community, and functioned as a "token to them by which they were assured of adoption as the people and household of God, and they in turn professed to enlist in God's service."[130] But likewise, "we [Christians] also are consecrated to God through baptism, to be reckoned as his people, and in turn swear fealty to him. By this it appears incontrovertible that baptism has taken the place of circumcision to fulfill the same office among us."[131]

Therefore in his discussion of infant baptism, Calvin wishes to maintain that "if the covenant still remains firm and steadfast, it applies no less today to the children of Christians than under the Old Testament it pertained to the infants of the Jews."[132] The children of Christians are considered holy, "even though born with only one believing parent," and thus are entitled entrance to the covenant through baptism. Calvin writes:

> In distinguishing the heirs of the kingdom from the illegitimate and foreigners, we have no doubt that God's election alone rules as of free right. Nevertheless, we see that it pleased him especially to embrace Abraham's offspring by his mercy, and, in order to attest that mercy more clearly, to seal it by circumcision. Now the condition of the Christian church is exactly the same. For as Paul argues . . . that the Jews are sanctified by their parents, so he teaches elsewhere that the children of Christians receive the same sanctification from their parents.[133]

Just as the Jews received a lower working of the Spirit through their general election, so Christian "infants are baptised into future repentance and faith, and even though these have not yet been formed in them, the seed of both lies hidden within them by the secret working of the Spirit."[134] These children become members of the covenant of grace, even though their particular election is known only to God. Once the child matures, and if he has been elected to salvation, God "renews them by the power, incomprehensible to us, of his Spirit, in whatever way he alone foresees will be expedient. . . . They shall be fired with great zeal for renewal, from learning that they were given the token of it in their first infancy in order that they might meditate upon it throughout life."[135] The child who was baptized and later becomes a true believer thus joins the inner circle of those who benefit from particular election. The individual who was not baptized as a child is in an analogous situation to the non-Hebrew during the Old Testament era: he is outside the covenant of grace until he receives the Spirit, at which time he is baptized (i.e., circumcised). Therefore, infant baptism is "a sort of initiation into the church, through which we are numbered among God's people."[136]

This type of covenant theology then allows Calvin to emphasize the importance of Christian parents to remind their children of their covenantal status, so that they will have an earnest zeal for worshipping God, for "when we consider that immediately from birth God takes and acknowledges them as his children, we feel a strong stimulus to instruct them in an earnest fear of God and observance of the law."[137]

Therefore the covenant of grace involves both a general election and a particular election. The conditional nature of the covenant, set forth most clearly in the Mosaic renewal of the covenant, is as applicable to the Christian as it was to the Hebrew. The Christian, like the Hebrew, is obligated to a faithful performance of the law. Without such a performance, God's curse will be experienced. It will be observed even more clearly in the next chapter that the true believer, whether Hebrew or Christian, who has experienced the regenerating power of the Spirit, has an even deeper obligation to the fulfillment of covenantal responsibilities. Those individuals who have been destined to receive the benefits of God's particular election will live a holy, disciplined life as required by the covenantal relationship, not through their own merit, but through the renewing energy of the Spirit.

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FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

[1] 2:10:2, p. 429.

[2] 2:10:1, p. 429.

[3] 2:10:2, pp. 429-430.

[4] 10:3:3, p. 431.

[5] 2:10:4, p. 431.

[6] 2:10:5, p. 432.

[7] Commentary on Genesis 18:3, trans. John King (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1948), Vol. 1, p. 475. (*Corpus Reformatorum*, XXIII, 254). Hereafter, *Corpus Reformatorum* will be abbreviated C R. Volume number refers to *Calvini Opera*.

[8] 2:10:14, p. 441.

[9] 2:10:18, p. 445.

[10] 2:10:23, p. 448.

[11] 2:10:23, p. 449.

[12] 2:11:2, p. 450.

[13] 2:11:2, p. 451.

[14] 2:11:5, p. 455. "It was fitting that, before the sun of righteousness had arisen there should be no great and shining revelation, no clear understanding. The Lord, therefore, so meted out the light of his Word to them that they still saw it afar off and darkly. Hence Paul expressed this slenderness of understanding by the word 'childhood."

[15] 2:11:6, p. 455, quoting Luke 10:24.

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[16] 2:11:11, pp. 460-461.

[17] 2:11:13, p. 462.

[18] 2:10:2, p. 419.

[19] 2:6:2, p. 342. For an excellent discussion of Calvin's Christology, see E. David Willis, Calvin's Catholic Christology (Leiden, 1966). Willis attempts to investigate the so-called extra Calvinisticum in Calvin's theology. This doctrine, which receives its name from Lutheran theologians, teaches that "the Eternal Son of God, even after the Incarnation, was united to the human nature to form One Person but was not restricted to the flesh." (p. 1) The doctrine raises the question: "Are the reality and work of the Second Person of the Trinity exhausted by his life in the flesh?" (p. 6) As a result of his investigation, Willis states that Calvin "keeps in the foreground the assertion that the Incarnation was not the Eternal Son's abdication of his universal empire but the reassertion of that empire over rebellious creation. This continuity of gracious order over creaturely attempts at discontinuity depends on the identity of the Redeeming Mediator in the flesh with the Mediator who is the Eternal Son of God by whom, and with whose Spirit, all things were created according to the Father's will. Just as he uses 'Mediator' in this twofold sense, Calvin also takes 'Christ' to refer both to the Eternal Word and to Jesus." (pp. 99-100) Willis goes on to state that the extra Calvinisticum functions "to remind us that salutary knowledge from Christ as witnessed to in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments when illumined by the Holy Spirit in the community of the faithful, derives not from his flesh alone. For the Christ witnessed to in the Scripture is precisely the Eternal Word through whom and with whose Spirit believers of the Old Testament knew God, and who, even in the Incarnation, was not confined to the flesh." (p. 130)

[20] 2:10:11, p. 437.

[21] Commentary on Genesis 12:3, Vol. 1, p. 349 (C R, XXIII, 177).

[22] Commentary on Genesis 17, Vol. 1, pp. 446-447 (C R, XXIII, 235).

[23] Commentary on Genesis 17, Vol. 1, p. 448 (C R, XXIII, 237).

[24] Commentary on Genesis 17, Vol. 1, p. 449 (C R, XXIII, 238).

[25] Commentary on Genesis 17, Vol. 1, pp. 449-450 (C R, XXIII, 238).

[26] Benjamin Charles Milner, Jr., Calvin's Doctrine of the Church (Leiden, 1970), p. 57.

[27] Commentary on Genesis 17, Vol. 1, p. 450 (C R, XXIII, 238-239).

[28] Commentary on Exodus 23:31, Four Last Books of Moses (hereafter abbreviated FLBM), trans. Charles Bingham (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1950), Vol. 1, p. 408. "The Ancient covenant is set before them, in order that they may respond to God's gratuitous favour, and on their part honor and worship Him, who had already anticipated them with His mercy." (C R, XXIV, 254).

[29] Commentary on Exodus 23:1, FLBM, Vol. 1, pp. 408-409 (C R, XXIV, 254).

[30] Commentary on Genesis 15:4, FLBM, Vol. 1, p. 404 (C R, XXIII, 211).

[31] 4:16:14, pp. 1336-1337.

[32] Commentary on Genesis 17, Vol. 1, p. 450 (C R, XXIII, 239).

[33] Commentary on Exodus 34:8, FLBM, Vol. 3, p. 389 (C R, XXV, 115).

[34] Commentary on Genesis 15:6, Vol. 1, p. 407. "We do not say that Abraham was justified because he laid hold on a single word, respecting the offspring to be brought forth, but because he embraced God as his father. And truly faith does not justify us for any other reason, than that it reconciles us unto God, and that it does so, not by its own

merit; but because we receive the grace offered us in the promise, and have no doubt of eternal life, being fully persuaded that we are loved by God as sons." (_C_ _R_, XXIII, 212-213)

[35] Commentary on Genesis 15, Vol. 1, p. 408 (_C_ _R_, XXIII, 213).

[36] Commentary on Genesis 15, Vol. 1, p. 408 (_C_ _R_, XXIII, 213).

[37] Commentary on Genesis 17: 2-3, Vol. 1, p. 444 (_C_ _R_, XXIII, 235).

[38] Commentary on Genesis 17:3, Vol. 1, p. 445. Here we see the beginning of Calvin's notion of the mutuality of the covenant. Benjamin Milner writes that the covenant "is mutual because there are rights and responsibilities on both sides; but this mutuality is strictly governed by the relationship of _ordination to ordo_, so that the covenanted community is altogether dependent upon God's covenantal word." (p. 49) (_C_ _R_, XXIII, 235)

[39] Commentary on Genesis 17:9, Vol. 1, p. 451 (_C_ _R_, XXIII, 239).

[40] Commentary on Genesis 17:11, Vol. 1, p. 453 (_C_ _R_, XXIII,241).

[41] 4:16:4, p. 1327. Calvin is referring here to the general election. Circumcision was the rite of initiation into the Hebraic covenantal community; baptism is the rite of initiation into the Christian covenantal community. This community of the covenant of grace is the object of God's general election. Within this community, there are individuals who have been chosen to be the recipients of God's particular election and thus are destined to salvation. The promise of salvation is offered to all within the covenant community, but only a certain number will have the promises come true for them. These concepts will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

[42] Milner clarifies this point by demonstrating that for Calvin, Abraham is the father of believers in a social as well as biological sense. See pp. 50-52.

[43] 4:16:5, p. 1328.

[44] 4:16:6, p. 1329.

[45] Commentary on Exodus 2:23, FLBM, Vol. 1, p. 58 (C R, XXIV, 34).

[46] Milner writes: "Law and covenant are not . . . antithetical to each other; we should rather think of the law as a later expression of the covenant, a public and permanent record of God's will to bind the people to himself, and to reign over them." (p. 74)

[47] Commentary on Deuteronomy 7:7, FLBM, Vol. 1, p. 356 (C R, XXIV, 221).

[48] Milner, p. 78.

[49] 2:7:1, p. 349.

[50] Milner, p. 50.

[51] Commentary on Exodus 24:5, FLBM, Vol. 3, p. 321 (C R, XXV, 75).

[52] Commentary on Deuteronomy 6:20 ff, FLBM, Vol. 1, p. 362 (C R, XXIV, 225).

[53] Commentary on Deuteronomy 10:16, FLBM, Vol.1, p. 358 (C R, XXIV, 222).

[54] Commentary on Exodus 19:1, FLBM, Vol. 3, p. 321 (C R, XXV, 75).

[55] Commentary on Exodus 19:1, FLBM, Vol. 1, p. 313 (C R, XXIV, 192-193).

[56] Commentary on Deuteronomy 11:26, FLBM, Vol. 3, p. 210 (C R, XXV, 10).

[57] Commentary on Leviticus 26:3, FLBM, Vol. 3, pp. 214-215. "Their obedience would not be acceptable to him because it was deserving, but because He visits it with His paternal favour. Whence it appears how foolish is the pride of those who imagine that they make God their debtor, as if according to His agreement." (C R, XXV, 13)

[58] Commentary on Leviticus 26:11, FLBM, Vol. 3, pp. 219-220 (C R, XXV, 16).

[59] Commentary on Deuteronomy 28:9, FLBM, Vol. 3, p. 221 (C R, XXV, 17).

[60] Commentary on Leviticus 18:5, FLBM, Vol. 3, p. 205 (C R, XXV, 7).

[61] Leviticus 26:14-17.

[62] 2:7:5, p. 353.

[63] "The Use of the Law," FLBM, Vol. 3, p. 197. "As soon as the law presents itself before us, the curse of God falls upon our heads, as if he smote us with a thunder-bolt from heaven." (C R, 24, 725).

[64] 2:7:3, p. 352.

[65] "The Use of the Law," FLBM, Vol. 3, p. 197 (C R, XXIV, 725).

[66] 2:7:6, pp. 354-355.

[67] Leviticus 26:40-42.

[68] Commentary on Leviticus 26:40, FLBM, Vol. 3, p. 240 (C R, XXV, 28).

[69] Hosea 2:23.

[70] Commentary on Exodus 32:20, FLBM, Vol. 3, p. 348 (C R, XXV, 19).

[71] Commentary on Exodus 32:19, *FLBM*, Vol. 3, p. 348 (*C R*, XXV, 19).

[72] Commentary on Deuteronomy 4:30, *FLBM*, Vol. 3, p. 271 (*C R*, XXV, 46).

[73] Commentary on Psalm 78:67, trans. James Anderson (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1949), Vol. 3, p. 277 (*C R*, XXXI, 74).

[74] Commentary on Psalm 89:25, Vol. 3, p. 436. "As the people by their wickedness had, as it were, blocked up the way, and interc-pted the blessing of God, their inheritance (had been) more limited than the promise implied. But now God declares, that during the reign of David, it will again be enlarged, so that the people shall possess the whole country, from the sea even to the river Euphrates. From this we gather, that what God has promised by Moses was fulfilled only in the person of David, that is to say, from his time" (*C R*, XXI, 820).

[75] 2:10:15, pp. 441-442.

[76] Commentary on Psalm 89:28, Vol. 3, p. 437 (*C R*, XXXI, 821).

[77] Commentary on Psalm 132:11, Vol. 5, pp. 153-154 (*C R*, XXXII, 348).

[78] Commentary on Psalm 89:3, Vol. 3, pp. 421-422 (*C R*, XXXI, 813).

[79] Commentary on Psalm 89:30, Vol. 3, p. 439 (*C R*, XXI, 821).

[80] Commentary on Psalm 89:30, Vol. 3, p. 439 (*C R*, XXXI, 822).

[81] Commentary on Psalm 89:30, Vol. 3, p. 439 (*C R*, XXXI, 822).

[82] 2:6:4, p. 346.

[83] 2:6:3, pp. 345-346. "By this [Isaiah] indirectly indicates that although king and people wickedly rejected the promise offered them, as if they were purposely trying to discredit God's pledge, yet the covenant would not be invalidated, for the redeemer would come at his appointed time. In short, to show God Merciful, all the prophets were constantly at pains to proclaim that kingdom of David upon which both redemption and eternal salvation depended."

[84] 2:6:3, pp. 345-346.

[85] Commentary on Psalm 2: 1-3, Vol. 1, pp. 11-12 (C R, XXXI, 43).

[86] Commentary on Psalm 132:10, Vol. 5, p. 153 (C R, XXXII, 347).

[87] Commentary on Psalm 2:8, Vol. 1, pp. 18-19 (C R, XXXI, 47).

[88] Commentary on Psalm 2:1-3, Vol. 1, pp. 11-12 (C R, XXX, 43).

[89] Commentary on Psalm 132:13, Vol. 5, p. 157 (C R, XXXII, 349).

[90] Commentary on Psalm 132:12, Vol. 5, p. 155 (C R, XXXII, 349).

[91] 2:6:2, p. 342.

[92] 2:7:3, p. 352.

[93] Jeremiah 31.

[94] Commentary on Jeremiah 31:31, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1950), Vol. 4, p. 126 (C R, XXXVIII, 688).

[95] Commentary on Jeremiah 31:31, Vol. 4, p. 127 (C R, XXXVIII, 688).

[96] Commentary on Jeremiah 31:31, Vol. 4, p. 127 (*C R*, XXXVIII, 688).

[97] Commentary on Jeremiah 31:31, Vol. 4, p. 127 (*C R*, XXXVIII, 688).

[98] Commentary on Jeremiah 32:40, Vol. 4, p. 217 (*C R*, XXXIX, 43).

[99] Commentary on Jeremiah 32:40, Vol. 4, pp. 218-219 (*C R*, XXXIX, 44).

[100] Commentary on Jeremiah 33:17-18, Vol. 4, pp. 259-260 (*C R*, XXXIX, 73).

[101] 2:15:3, p. 498.

[102] 2:15:3, p. 498.

[103] 2:15:3, p. 499.

[104] 2:15:6, p. 502.

[105] Commentary on Jeremiah 33:17-18, Vol. 4, p. 260 (*C R*, XXXIX, 73).

[106] Commentary on Hebrews 8:6, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1949), p. 86 (*C R*, LV, 100).

[107] Commentary on Hebrews 1:1, p. 32 (*C R*, LV, 9-10).

[108] Commentary on Hebrews 8:7, p. 186 (*C R*, LV, 100).

[109] Commentary on Hebrews 8:10, p. 188 (*C R*, LV, 102).

[110] Commentary on Jeremiah 31:34, Vol. 4, p. 134 (*C R*, XXXVIII,693).

[111] Commentary on Jeremiah 31:31, Vol. 4, p. 135 (*C R*, XXXVIII, 693).

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[112] 2:9:3, p. 425.

[113] 2:9:3, p. 426.

[114] Commentary on Jeremiah 33:14, Vol. 4, p. 248 (C R, XXXIX, 63).

[115] 2:9:4, p. 426.

[116] "The Use of the Law," FLBM, Vol. 3, p. 199 (C R, XXIV, 727).

[117] Commentary on Jeremiah 31:34, Vol. 4, p. 141 (C R, XXXVIII, 697).

[118] Commentary on Psalm 78:37, trans. Anderson (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1949), Vol. 3, p. 254 (C R, XXXI, 734).

[119] Sermon of Master John Calvin upon the Fifth Book of Moses called Deuteronomie (London, 1583), trans. Golding, in Hoekema, p. 145.

[120] See Hoekema, pp. 148-153.

[121] 3:21:6, p. 929.

[122] 3:21:6, p. 929.

[123] 3:21:7, p. 930.

[124] 3:21:7, pp. 930-931.

[125] Hoekema, p. 150.

[126] Sermon on Deuteronomy 10:15-17, C R, XXVII, 47, trans. Hoekema, p. 151: "But meanwhile let us note that there has been a general election which pertains to all the people [the Jews], which deserves to be highly esteemed; however, it does not profit unless each one for his own part is participating in it . . . . See here . . . the election of God whereby he puts such differences between

the lineage of Abraham and all the rest of the world . . . . Lo, here is an election which pertains in general to all the children of Abraham, but it was necessary that such a grace was to be ratified by faith . . . by some of them. For we see that many of them were cut off . . . . Now, then, the election of God which extended itself to all the people was not sufficient, but it was necessary that each one should be a participant of it for himself. How? By faith." "But let us see from whence faith proceeds: God has willed to confirm his grace in those in whom it pleased him to do so. . . . Lo, here a double election of God. The one extends itself to all the people, because circumcision was given indifferently to all . . . and the promises likewise were common. However, it is necessary that God add a second grace, namely, that he touches the hearts of his elect . . . and these come to him, and he causes them to receive the good which is offered them."

[127] Sermon on Deuteronomy 10:15-17, _C R_, XXVII, 47, trans. Hoekema, in Hoekema, p. 152.

[128] 4:16:3, p. 1327.

[129] 3:16:4, p. 1327.

[130] 4:16:4, p. 1327.

[131] 4:16:4, p. 1327.

[132] 4:16:5, p. 1328.

[133] 4:16:15, p. 1337.

[134] 4:16:20, p. 1343.

[135] 4:16:21, p. 1344.

[136] 4:16:30, p. 1352.

[137] 4:16:32, p. 1359.

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CHAPTER THREE

CALVIN'S COVENANTAL ETHIC

I. The First Step in Receiving the Blessings of the Covenant: Faith and Repentance

It was observed in the second chapter that one unique aspect of Christ's renovation of the Abrahamic covenant is the extraordinary outpouring of the Holy Spirit. While the Spirit was known to the old covenant saint, the new covenant believer has access to the Spirit in a manner that was unknown to the faithful of old. The first blessing that results from Christ's work involves the activity of the Spirit, prompting faith and repentance, which is requisite to cultivating a correct morality that will be pleasing to God. Without the activity of the Spirit, the redemption accomplished by Christ would be null and void, for only through the Spirit is the Christian united with Christ. Calvin states that "until our minds become intent upon the Spirit, Christ, so to speak, lies idle because we coldly contemplate him as outside ourselves--indeed, far from us . . . . By the grace and power of the same Spirit we are made his members, to keep us under himself and in turn to possess him."[1]

The principal work of the Holy Spirit is faith, acting as the "inner teacher" who illuminates the mind so that the promise of salvation is clearly perceived. In his exposition of Calvin's theology, Ronald Wallace writes:

> Faith is . . . an entirely supernatural gift--a new capacity created within man whereby what is in Heaven is really possessed and enjoyed by him. It effects such a secret and wonderful communion with Christ that even though Jesus Christ remains entire in Heaven, He is nevertheless grasped so firmly and possessed so completely that He may be said actually to dwell in our hearts.[2]

According to Calvin, faith begins when the fear of God prepares a place for the Word of God in the mind of the elect. Calvin states: "A pious desire of learning, humility, and reverence should be accounted the commencement of faith, since it is from these elements that God begins to perfect faith in us by certain progressive steps."[3] Calvin is eager to impress upon the reader the manner in which his understanding of faith differs from the scholastic understanding. First, Roman Catholic emphasis on faith as assent to the history of the gospel is extremely weak, for it denies that faith involves personal knowledge of Christ. Secondly, the scholastic doctrine of implicit faith is a fiction that "utterly destroys" true faith. Calvin asks: "Is this what believing means--to understand nothing, provided only that you submit your feeling obediently to the Church?"[4] Salvation is obtained not by embracing whatever the church teaches, but by knowing that God is merciful toward sinners

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because of the redeeming work of Christ. It is true that there is an implicit element in faith, in that one becomes teachable, thereby preparing for faith. But this is far different from the definition that the scholastics give to the term "implicit faith." According to Calvin, faith "is not merely a question of knowing that God exists, but also--and this especially--of knowing what is his will toward us. For it is not so much our concern to know who he is in himself, as what he wills to be toward us."[5]

Faith arises from seizing hold of God's promise of grace in Christ. The words of mercy and compassion that pour forth from the Bible establish faith in this promise. Calvin writes:

> For how would it profit us to be instructed in righteousness of life, unless the perception of our guilt and iniquity induce us to seek after the remedy. But when God allures us so gently and kindly by his promises, and again pursues us with the thunders of his curse, it is partly to render us inexcusable, and partly to shut us up deprived of all confidence in our own righteousness, so that we may learn to embrace his covenant of grace, and flee to Christ, who is the end of the law. This is the intention of the Promises, in which he declares that he will be merciful, since there is forgiveness ready for the sinner.[6]

Calvin defines faith as "a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit."[7] In denying the Roman Catholic doctrine of implicit faith, and in fact the entire role of the Church in establishing for the believer the certainty of his faith, Calvin, like other sixteenth-century reformers, was faced with the problem of ascertaining whether or not one has saving faith. Calvin admits that while only the elect receive faith and feel the power of the promise of grace, the reprobate "are sometimes affected by almost the same feeling as the elect, so that even in their own judgment they do not in any way differ from the elect."[8] Calvin's response to this perplexing situation is that God gives those reprobates who seemingly have the signs of faith, just enough taste of heavenly gifts, so as to "render them more convicted and inexcusable."[9] They receive a "lower working" of the Spirit, which can only result in a confused awareness of grace. Yet the reprobates do recognize the grace of God, and in fact receive something of the gift of reconciliation. The experience of the true believer is different, for he knows that God has snatched him from death and has received him into his safekeeping. But the question remains: how does the believer know that he is of the elect, and that his experience of grace is not the same as the experience of the reprobate?

Calvin's answer to this question of certainty is extremely important to the development of his ethic. Later in the chapter, it will be noted that in the moral life of the individual, consistency of assurance is the only way to know that one is indeed of the elect, and has had his sins forgiven. The believer is aware of the fact that even the reprobate can show assurance; therefore his assurance must be, to have psychological certainty, more pronounced than the hypocritical reprobate. The question that we will have to ask is, in what way does this problem influence Calvin's ethic? Is assurance felt through pious inward feelings, and/or through an ethic of progress based on the moral law that stresses doing a lifetime of good works? Later in the chapter an attempt will be made to answer these questions. It will be argued that Calvin's solution to the problem involves the employment of Hebraic notions, particularly the role of law in the covenantal relationship between God and the believer. But for now it is sufficient to note that the life of the hypocritical reprobate is marked by inconsistency in the certainty of salvation, in questions of doctrine, and in ethics. Thus the emphasis is placed on the idea that the individual who is elected to salvation will ultimately triumph over doubt and temptation. Since the believer is simul justus et peccator, his new life in Christ never attains to a state of perfection, since the evil in man is never wholly extinguished. But through the power of the Holy Spirit the elect do attain to a level of consistency in regard to the certainty of salvation, sound doctrine, and correct moral living. For the final proof of salvation is given in the gospel of John: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."[10]

While it is possible to postpone the ethical implications of the command to continue in God's Word, it is important at this point to examine the implication of this command for Calvin's understanding of faith. Faith involves knowledge, but not "comprehension of the sort that is commonly concerned with those things which fall under human sense perception."[11] The knowledge that Christ grants is more lofty than understanding. For this reason Calvin states that the knowledge of faith consists in assurance rather than comprehension; it is a knowledge of the heart rather than the mind. H. J. Forstman states:

> When Calvin writes of the certainty associated with faith, it is an intensely personal thing which he has in mind. It is the certainty of one's own future adoption that is sealed by the testimony of the Holy Spirit. In Calvin's mind the notion of certainty fits quite properly with the term 'persuasion,' which is central in his discussion of faith. A person is 'firmly persuaded' or 'certainly persuaded' that Christ is his and that God's free grace is his through Christ. This certainty that is the consequence of faith may even be used as a more appropriate description of the knowledge of faith than the more cognitive term 'comprehension' . . . This most crucial of all matters is certain because, although it is only held in the most personal and inward way,

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> it is assured by that which is outside us. Men are always weak and much too prone to waver. If left to themselves salvation would be utterly inconceivable.[12]

The opposite of faith is not ignorance but unbelief. In setting forth this doctrine Calvin is following the Hebraic rather than Platonic understanding of knowledge. Faith allows the individual to overcome doubts concerning his inability to measure up to the demands of God, and overcomes anxiety that impedes the full reception of God's mercy. The believer, unlike the hypocritical reprobate, develops a "boldness" that can arise only from confidence in God's benevolence. Calvin writes that "no man is a believer . . . except him who, leaning upon the assurance of his salvation, confidently triumphs over the devil and death . . . ."[13] Boldness is the condition that is necessary for the individual to so triumph.

Yet, Calvin wishes to recognize that the life of the believer involves temptation and doubt: "Surely, while we teach that faith ought to be certain and assured, we cannot imagine any certainty that is not tinged with doubt, or any assurance that is not assailed by some anxiety . . . believers are in perpetual conflict with their own unbelief."[14] Again, the reader must be reminded that the reprobate experience the same tension between belief and unbelief. Yet, Calvin wishes to deny that "in whatever way [the particular elect] are afflicted, they

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fall away and depart from the certain assurance received from God's mercy."[15]

David offers the Christian an example of the way anxiety functions in the life of the believer.[16] From the Psalms one learns that David was frequently plagued with doubt concerning the mercy of God towards him: "Has God forgotten to be merciful? . . . . Will he turn away forever?" Yet, David never gave in to this anxiety; rather, he pressed toward faith, saying "Wait for Jehovah, be strong; he will strengthen your heart. Wait for Jehovah!" According to Calvin, David was guilty of "timidity," of a lack of boldness to seize hold of the promises. The Christian is continually torn between flesh and spirit, for this division in the soul arises from the imperfection of faith, and such imperfection exists as long as one is in the flesh. But in the life of the elect, faith will ultimately triumph over temptation and doubt. As the Christian grows in his knowledge of God, the victory becomes increasingly sure. Yet the battle is continuous, for "there are innumerable and varied temptations that constantly assail us with great violence."[17] The difference between the elect and the reprobate, aside from the ethical difference, is that faith is never wholly extinguished in the individual who has been truly called by God, and hence his quest for God continues.

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Faith begins, rests, and ends in God's promise of mercy. This is a promise that is unconditional, not dependent on human works. This doctrine does not argue that "believers embrace and grasp the Word of God in every respect"; rather, it simply means that the promise of mercy is the proper goal of faith.[18] This doctrine involves the awareness that while God is the avenger of wicked deeds, he is merciful to them whom he chooses. The promise becomes efficacious for one's faith through the illumination of the Holy Spirit. The mind is illuminated and the heart receives strength and courage: "As we cannot come to Christ unless we be drawn by the Spirit of God, so when we are drawn we are lifted up in mind and heart above our understanding."[19] Without the Spirit, which is the gift of the covenant, man is incapable of faith. Forstman writes that "the reason Calvin gives for looking to the Spirit as the means by which Christ's benefits are made available to us is that not everyone has faith. Faith, in Calvin's understanding, is not a human possibility. Why one man comes to faith and another does not can only be explained by comprehending faith as a gift of God."[20]

The fruit of faith is repentance, for "no one can embrace the grace of the gospel without betaking himself from the errors of his past life into the right way, and applying his whole effort to the practice of repentance."[21]

Repentance does not precede faith; rather, it flows from faith, just as fruit is produced by the tree. Thus, the recognition of God's covenant promise precedes the knowledge of belonging to the kingdom of Christ, which in turn leads to a life of repentance. "No one will ever reverence God but him who trusts that God is propitious to him."[22] The "hope of pardon" acts like a "goad" prompting man to renounce his sins. Calvin attacks in one sweep both Jesuits and Spiritualists for denying that repentance extends throughout one's lifetime. From rebirth comes the desire to live a holy and devoted life. Thus, Calvin defines repentance as "the true turning of our life to God, a turning that arises from a pure and earnest fear of him; and it consists in the mortification of our flesh and vivification of the Spirit."[23] Conversion, a word which Calvin sometimes uses in place of repentance, is indeed a lifelong activity. Conversion consists in turning one's life to God in that a transformation occurs, not only in regard to the soul, but in one's ethical behavior itself. Fear of God is the beginning of repentance in that the mind must first be aroused by contemplating divine judgment. Mortification and vivification are involved in repentance in that there occurs, at least partially, the destruction of the old self, and the birth of the new self. Calvin states that the "first step toward obeying [God's] law is to deny our own nature."[24] Through such denial one is regenerated, and the end of regeneration is the restoration of the image of God. Mortification and vivification can occur only through the believer's participation in the death and resurrection of Christ.

Closely associated with repentance is the forgiveness of sins. Calvin writes that

> Repentance is preached . . . when, through the teaching of the gospel, men hear that all their thoughts, all their inclinations, all their efforts, are corrupt and vicious . . . they must be reborn if they would enter the kingdom of Heaven. Forgiveness of sins is preached when men are taught that for them Christ became redemption, righteousness, salvation, and life, by whose name they are freely accounted righteous and innocent in God's sight.[25]

A key aspect of the covenantal work of Christ is that God grants remission of sins; God does not demand the penalty sin deserves, since Christ in his role as priest bore the punishment due every individual.

Calvin is faithful to early Protestant thought in his interpretation of justification of faith. One is justified in God's sight if he is reckoned to be righteous by God. But since no man can through his natural power become righteous, the believer must rely totally on the righteousness of Christ. The act by which God justifies the sinner consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness. There is no other way to be accepted by God, and this reality was as true for

Abraham as it is today for the new covenant man. It is important to stress that one is declared righteous only by imputation of Christ's righteousness, for Calvin disagrees with Osiander's view that one becomes "substantially righteous" by the infusion of Christ's essence and quality. Calvin thus interprets the justification process from a highly legal standpoint. God declares the believer to be righteous, and this by imputation. To side with Osiander would amount to saying that man is justified by God's regenerating rather than pardoning activity. Righteousness and sanctification are intimately related, but not to the extent that Osiander believes. To agree with Osiander is to move dangerously close to the concept of justification by works. Rather, one is justified by faith in Christ, and shares in the gifts which Christ has earned. Any man who wishes to obtain Christ's righteousness must give up all thought of his own righteousness. Justification is a free gift, not the wages of works, and is possible because the righteousness of Christ is communicated to the believer by imputation.

Thus the first step in receiving the blessings that Christ's renovation of the old covenant has brought involves faith and repentance. According to Calvin's thought, faith and repentance, and the ensuing justification, were experienced by the faithful men of old. But the incarnational work of Christ has resulted in the widespread and deepening activity of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit implants the seed of faith, and faith is understood to be "a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ . . . ."[26] While the reprobate show signs of grace, the elect possess a peculiar "confidence" and a high level of consistency in the certainty of salvation, correct doctrine, and ethical behavior. The true believer develops a "boldness" that can arise only from confidence in God's benevolence. The fruit of faith is repentance, which consists in the death of the old man, the birth of the new man. One important consequence of faith and repentance, is that God justifies the believer, in that Christ's righteousness is imputed to him, making possible the forgiveness of sin. But despite the experience of grace, the life of the Christian is filled with temptation and doubt, as indeed was the life of the Hebrew saint. As noted, in Calvin's thought, as in Hebrew thought, the problem of certainty and assurance seems to be very real.

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II. The Second Step in Receiving the Blessings of the Covenant: Sanctification and the Life of Obedience

A. Sanctification

The fruit of God's covenant with man is not confined to justification and remission of sins, for the individual who experiences rebirth looks forward to a regenerate life in Christ. From faith comes the knowledge of God's benefits to the forgiven sinner, and from this knowledge piety develops, which Calvin understands as reverence joined with love of God. Calvin writes that the

> restoration [of the self] does not take place in one moment of time or one day or one year; but through continual and sometimes even slow advances God wipes out in his elect the corruptions of the flesh, cleanses them of guilt, consecrates them to himself as temples renewing all their minds to true purity that they may practice repentance throughout their lives and know that this warfare will end only at death.[27]

Through the process of sanctification, the believer loosens his bondage to sin, and strives towards holiness, which consists of total obedience to the law. Yet this goal can never be reached since "there remains in a regenerate man a smoldering cinder of evil, from which desires continually leap forth to allure and spur him to commit sin."[28] Calvin argues the position that even the most saintly of believers remains a sinner. Calvin disagrees with Augustine's attempt to label inordinate desires that plague

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the Christian "weakness," and that such desires only become sin when the will gives its consent. Rather, Calvin deems it sin "when man is tickled by any desire at all against the law of God."[29] The process referred to as sanctification can never totally remove the depravity of inordinate desiring.

The individual whose regeneration is continual, gains a power through the Spirit that allows him to "gain the upper hand" over sin. But Calvin is hesitant to stress the extent of this victory. Fearful of the Spiritualists, Calvin is careful to emphasize that real victory can be won only in the next life. In response to the Spiritualist contention that the Spirit of Christ within the believer offers the only infallible guide to correct behavior, Calvin writes that this concept and corresponding morality will lead the believer into sin. To claim spiritual perfection is to loosen the guard that contains sin. To deny continuous spiritual warfare is to place one's self in the precarious position of suddenly being "overwhelmed by the stratagems of our flesh."[30] The Spirit is no patron of sin, and thus the Spirit encourages the believer to hold fast against all temptation and to rely on God's eternal law, for "the more earnestly any man measures his life by the standard of God's law, the surer are the signs of repentance that he shows."[31] Writing against the Spiritualists, Calvin states: "I should like to know from them what this spirit is by whose inspiration they are born up so high that they dare despise the Scriptural doctrine as childish and mean."[32] Even though Paul was "caught up even to the third heaven" he was proficient in the doctrine of the law. One cannot gain the benefits of the Holy Spirit without the aid of Scripture. Word and Spirit belong together, "for by a kind of mutual bond the Lord has joined together the certainty of his Word and of his Spirit so that the perfect religion of the Word may abide in our minds when the Spirit . . . shines; and that we in turn may embrace the Spirit with no fear of being deceived when we recognize him in his own image, namely, in the Word."[33]

The sanctified life thus involves the commitment to obedience. The only purpose in God's electing men to salvation is that he might have a holy people. By virtue of being called, one is obligated to pursue this course. Just as the Hebrews were "laid under obligation to devote themselves and their services to God" by virtue of their election, so is the new covenant man.[34] The nature of this obligation can be seen in this statement by Calvin:

> We gather, that in proportion to the abundance of grace with which anyone is endued, he is solemnly bound to live piously and justly. For God does not wish the gifts he bestows upon us to live idle, but to produce their appropriate fruits; and we must especially remember that when he adopts us, and gathers us into his church, we are not 'called to uncleanness,' but to purity of life, and to shew

> forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.[35]

True conversion is proved by the tenor and consistency of one's life, for the individual who has received the benefits of the covenant has an obligation to serve God in holiness and righteousness. If one fails in this obligation, he is guilty of the sin of ingratitude, which, from Calvin's perspective, is a most serious offense to God. Calvin writes: "Ever since God revealed himself Father to us, we must prove our ungratefulness to him if we did not in turn show ourselves his sons. Ever since Christ cleansed us with the washing of his blood, and imparted this cleansing through baptism, it would be unfitting to befoul ourselves with new pollutions."[36] Behind these statements one finds Calvin's belief that there is an appropriate place in the life of the Christian for continual fear of God. He who is ungrateful for his election can solve his dilemma through the cultivation of holy fear.

In addition to his discussion of gratitude, Calvin also gives the reader of the Institutes two more reasons why the Christian must cultivate a holy life. First, the Christian must be holy because God is holy. The bond of union between man and God is not love, but holiness. To be reckoned among the people of the Lord, one must dwell in the holy city of Jerusalem; thus one must be purified of all wickedness and uncleanness. Secondly, one must strive for holiness because Christ is holy, and the believer must conform to his image.[37] Christ is the believer's example, drawing the believer from the sin of this world into the purity of the next, for "we have been adopted as sons by the Lord with this one condition: that our life express Christ, the bond of our adoption."[38]

Thus the motivation behind the striving for sanctification centers in the reality of obligation: one is obligated to be holy because God is holy; one is obligated to be holy because Christ, the instrument of one's adoption, is holy; and one is obligated to be holy out of a fear that disobedience would demonstrate ingratitude to the God who has seen fit to elect some to salvation. The foundation of Calvin's ethic is obligation— God has chosen the individual, and he is obligated to respond with a life of obedience. It is a covenantal relationship: God granted the promise of salvation to Abraham, and demanded obedience; God sent his Son into the world to fulfill the promise, and demands obedience. This is the condition that is attached to the covenant.

It is true that Calvin's ethic is obligatory in an even more basic sense. Adam was obligated to remain obedient to God by virtue of the fact that he was created by God. In fact, Calvin's statement that one must be holy because God is holy, points to this most basic form of obligation. Adam's sin involved a refusal to recognize this primary obligation. Just as there is a natural theology in Calvin's thought, so there is a natural ethic. But since man sinned, and is now totally corrupt, natural theology and ethics are of secondary importance.[39] Now the focus is on an obligatory ethic that stems from God's covenantal relationship with man. One must stress the fact that Calvin plays down any impetus that would lead to a recognition of an Old Testament ethic and a New Testament ethic. There has been only one covenant in the history of salvation, and there has been, correspondingly, only one ethic that serves the believer in his striving for holiness. This is not to say that there are no differences in the ethical thought of Moses and Christ. In the same way that the new covenant differs from the old, Christ's ethic differs from that of Moses. The differences center in clarity rather than substance. While Christ fulfills the types of priest and king, he also fulfills the Mosaic ethic. Christ is the living soul of the law. This means that the Christian has a distinct advantage over the Hebrew, for "when anything grows in us, and our endowments manifest themselves more conspicuously, our progress is only derived from the continual operation of the Spirit."[40] Therefore the Christian is granted a power which was known to the old covenant man only faintly, that permits him to fulfill his obligation to live holy in response to God's gracious saving

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activity.

B. The Third Function of the Law

Regeneration would be impossible without the conversion of the will which results from the inward bestowal of divine grace: "God begins his good work in us . . . by arousing love and desire and zeal for righteousness in our hearts; or, to speak more correctly, by bending, forming, and directing our hearts to righteousness."[41] The will is created anew, and therefore every good work that the regenerate man does is the result of the grace of God. Calvin completely disagrees with the scholastic position that the believer "co-operates" with grace, for that would place merit before grace. The man who has a right will has it not from his own power, but only from God. The gift of perseverance means that God's purpose in electing some to salvation will reach its goal. Calvin states: "Does not the Spirit of God, everywhere self-consistent, nourish the very inclination to obedience that he first engendered, and strengthen its constancy to persevere."[42] Whenever the will chooses good, God's grace is active.

According to Calvin, the essence of the regenerate life is, as Ezekiel said: "I shall put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes."[43] The person who demonstrates his gratefulness to God by responding to his call, commits himself to a life that consists of zeal for the law. Calvin breaks with the Lutheran position concerning law, by arguing in favor of the so-called "third function" of the law, or, more appropriately, the pastoral function of the law. The reader will recall that the first function, the pedagogical, "warns, informs, convicts, and lastly condemns, every man of his own unrighteousness."[44] The second function of the law is civil; the law creates fear in the minds of the totally depraved and unregenerate, so that they will not execute what they desire. Luther accepted both these functions, but denied the validity of the pastoral function, for fear that it would interfere with that unique freedom that Christ has brought the believer.

Calvin argues that the pastoral function of the law is the "principal" use of the law. Through the law Christians learn "more thoroughly each day the nature of the Lord's will to which they aspire . . ."[45] No man can escape the necessity of the law, for here the divine will is made known. One must remember Calvin's contention that Christ is the soul of the law; therefore, by knowing the law the believer knows Christ. The law arouses one to obedience, and keeps one on the narrow path to victory which always lies ahead. Calvin's position is made clear when he states, in regard to the pastoral function:

> In this way the saints must press on; for,

> however eagerly they may in accordance with the Spirit strive toward God's righteousness, the listless flesh always so burdens them that they do not proceed with due readiness. The law is to the flesh like a whip to an idle and balky ass, to arouse it to work. Even for a spiritual man not yet free of the weight of the flesh the law remains a constant sting that will not let him stand still.[46]

The law is an image-making instrument, not because it persuades, leads, and beckons with the voice of kindness, but because it exhorts, stings, and goads since it is the eternal law of God to which one must be conformed, according to the condition attached to the covenant. It provides for the regulation of the entire life of man.

In his discussion of the third function of the law, Calvin again attacks the Spiritualists: "Certain ignorant persons . . . rashly cast out the whole law of Moses, and bid farewell to the two Tables of the Law."[47] Calvin refers to Psalm 1: 2 to demonstrate that the life of a righteous man involves a continual meditation upon the law, and this principle is as true today as it was in the time of David. The law points out the goal toward which the Christian must strive. In his commentary on Galatians, Calvin had to answer Paul's claim that the law "was added because of transgression, till the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made." In response to this statement, upon which Luther based so much of his thought, Calvin states:

> The law has manifold uses, but Paul confines himself to that which bears on his present subject. He did not propose to inquire in how many ways the law is of advantage to men. It is necessary to put readers on guard at this point; for very many, I find, have fallen into the mistake of acknowledging no other advantage belonging to the law, but what is expressed in this passage . . . Paul himself elsewhere speaks of the precepts of the law as profitable for doctrine and exhortations. The definition here given of the use of the law is not complete.[48]

When Calvin, in the same commentary, comes to the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth verses of Chapter three, which argue that the law served as a schoolmaster to bring man to Christ, but now that faith has come the believer is no longer under a schoolmaster, he must ask: "Is the law so abolished that we have nothing to do with it? I answer, the law, so far as it is a rule of life, a bridle to keep us in the fear of the Lord, a spur to correct the sluggishness of our flesh . . . is as much in force as ever, and remains untouched."[49] Calvin thoroughly agrees with Paul and Luther in regard to the first function of the law, but when it comes to the pastoral function, he is in disagreement with Luther, and seeks to find passages in other Pauline letters to substantiate his claim.

Calvin's understanding of the validity of the third function of the law becomes the basis for his ethic as well as his anti-sectarianism. It seems fair to say that the moral law of the Old Testament has greater implications for

Calvin's thought than does the Sermon on the Mount, since the latter is but a clarification and elucidation of the former. The object of regeneration is to bring one's behavior more in line with the kind of obedience that God demands, and to find the will of God, one goes to the law. The more "teachable" one is, the more ethical he becomes. Not one thing needs to be added to or taken from the law. For those who question the belief that the Ten Commandments contain sufficient rules for the regulation of one's entire life, Calvin makes clear his employment of synecdoche, that the commandments and prohibitions always contain more than is expressed in words.[50] Thus when a good thing is commanded, the evil thing that conflicts with it is forbidden. Likewise, when evil things are forbidden, the opposite duties are enjoined. Also, when at first glance a law appears to refer to only the body and the material world, it will upon deeper reflection refer to the soul and the spiritual world as well. Thus, for instance, anger and hatred are ways of murdering the soul. In this way, Calvin is convinced of the sufficiency of the law in molding the believer's life, so that he will be worthy of the victory that awaits him in heaven.

In order to gain a more complete perspective of Calvin's ethic, as related to his employment of the pastoral use of the law, it will be helpful to turn to his understanding of the commandment which serves as a summary of the

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two tables, that one should love the Lord with all his heart, soul, and mind, and his neighbor as himself. The commandment to love God means to "serve God with true piety," while the commandment to love one's neighbor means to "conduct ourselves innocently towards men according to the rule of charity."[51] We have here a clue to the nature of Calvin's ethic. Love of God is equated with piety, and the pious individual is one who fears God, is content with the proper knowledge of God, and strives to live a holy life. Indeed, fear is the most basic attitude of the pious person, since from fear comes knowledge, and from knowledge comes obedience.[52] Thus, the sum of the first table of the law can be reduced to appropriate fear of God. In regard to Calvin's summary of the second table, the important aspect is that Calvin equates love with justice. He is eager to stress that one must fulfill the "duties of love," and that he must do this without becoming proud, insolent, contemptuous, arrogant, or upbraiding. But the foundation of the duty to love is natural law. Calvin states that "the sharing of tasks . . . have nothing gratuitous about it but, rather, [is] a payment of that which, due by the law of nature, it would be monstrous to refuse."[53] It would be "monstrous to refuse" because every person has stamped upon him the image of God, and to act without love, or to withhold love toward one's neighbor, is to offend God. In concluding his summary of this commandment, Calvin writes that "a short and clear definition may be laid down, that nothing is required unto a good life except piety and justice."[54] Calvin's employment of the pastoral function of the law, which is the result of his covenantal theology, influences every aspect of his thought. It is also enlightening to realize that according to Calvin, fulfillment of the first half of the above commandment is more basic and primary than the obligation of love towards one's neighbor. In commenting on the episode recorded in Exodus 32, when God commanded the Levites to "commit slaughter" against those who had violated the first two commandments of the decalogue, Calvin writes: "This may at first sight seem to be cruel and inhuman, when [the Levites] are forbidden to spare their brothers, their friends, their neighbors; but it was by no means excessive, if one reflect how much more grievous it is to profane the sacred worship of God, than to inflict injury on man."[55] Elsewhere, in commenting on the structure of the commandments, Calvin makes the statement that "the worship of God comes first in order, and then the duties of charity follow."[56] From correct piety one will learn to live "righteously, innocently, and chastely with men."[57] Calvin thus denies the position that one might learn to love God through love of neighbor. Rather, piety is the foundation of correct morality and as we have seen, the chief quality of piety is the appropriate fear of God, a fear which stems from the awareness that one fails to live up to the holiness that God demands. For "the fear of God . . . is the foundation of due obedience to the law."[58]

By stressing the role that law plays in the life of the Christian, particularly the pastoral function of the law, Calvin was forced to take seriously the question of Christian freedom. He is convinced that the abrogation of the law since the coming of Christ refers only to the liberty of conscience and the discontinuance of ceremonial law. While the law remains inviolable, for "by teaching, admonishing, reproving, and correcting, [the law] forms us and prepares us for every good work," it has been abrogated to the extent that it can no longer condemn the Christian.[59] The law cannot condemn the believer because he has been freed from the curse of the law through the priestly work of Christ. Yet, Calvin wishes to add: "No part of the authority of the law is withdrawn without our having always to receive it with the same veneration and obedience."[60] But abrogation also occurs in regard to ceremonial law, which, the reader will recall, provided shadowy realities of the work of Christ, so that man's mind might be lifted toward the goal of the covenant promises. Since the coming of Christ, these laws have been terminated. But the ceremonial rules are to be revered and not scoffed at, since the believer can now see, through Christ, the strategic role they once played.

Calvin's discussion of the abrogation of the law leads to his fuller treatment of Christian freedom. Calvin sees this freedom as an "appendage of justification," consisting of three parts. First, as has been indicated, Christians are free in that "the consciences of believers, in seeking assurance of their justification before God, should rise above and advance beyond the law, forgetting all law righteousness."[61] Thus the Christian can lay aside all consideration of works, relying solely on the grace of Christ and God's mercy. Calvin immediately adds that this does not mean that the law becomes "superfluous for believers," for the pastoral function of the law continues. But the Christian is free in that he knows that there is nothing he could do by himself to win the favor of God. Yet one must remember that, while this is indeed a Christian freedom, the law functioned in the same way for the old covenant man; that is, the law taught him his weakness so that he might rely on God's mercy, thereby being justified by faith. Hence, it seems appropriate to refer to this point of Calvin's analysis as "believer's freedom," since this principle has always been in effect during the history of the one eternal covenant, in both its Abrahamic and New forms. The only difference, one would have to conclude, is that the Christian understands this principle in a more profound way, due to the incarnation of Christ.

The second aspect of Christian freedom consists of the fact that "consciences observe the law, not as if constrained by the necessity of the law, but that freed from the law's yoke they will willingly obey God's will."[62] Consciences that are freed from the constraining necessity of the law, and works righteousness, willingly observe the law. Once the dread of the law is removed, the believer can, in freedom, begin to live the law. One is then capable of joyous obedience. In summary of this position, Calvin writes

> Those bound by the yoke of the law are like servants assigned certain tasks for each day by their masters. These servants think they have accomplished nothing, and dare not appear before their masters unless they have fulfilled the exact measure of their tasks. But sons, who are more generously and candidly treated by their fathers, do not hesitate to offer them incomplete and half-done and even defective works, trusting that their obedience and readiness of mind will be accepted by their fathers, even though they have not quite achieved what their fathers intended.[63]

Thus the believer is emancipated by grace, thereby no longer needing to fear God's reaction to the remnants of sin that remain. But this freedom does not mean carefree living; rather, it leads to the desire to do the good, knowing that this is the will of the Father. Again, if one is to relate this to Calvin's understanding of covenant and law, he must ask whether this is a freedom peculiar to the believer since the coming of Christ. Did not the faithful old covenant man possess the same freedom, by virtue of his free justification? The answer must be yes, with the qualifying note that this freedom is felt more extensively and more joyously since God's grace has been more clearly revealed through Christ's renovation of the old covenant.

The third and last aspect of Christian freedom involves the concept of adiaphora, which the Protestant reformers seized upon in their dispute with the Roman Catholic church. Calvin states: "Regarding outward things that are of themselves 'indifferent,' we are not bound before God by any religious obligation preventing us from sometimes using them and other times not using them, indifferently."[64] The Christian must recognize his freedom over external and incidental things, so that his conscience will not become ensnared in trivia. One misunderstands the nature of the gospel if he tortures himself over questions of food, drink, dress, etc. In his discussion of adiaphora, Calvin is writing against those individuals who he feels are "superstitious," and offers advice on how to solve perplexities of conscience. One must avoid two stances: displaying unwarranted daring confidence that turns away from God, and becoming immobile out of an overpowering fear of God. Rather, "we should use God's gifts for the purpose for which he gave them to us . . . . For here are included all ceremonies whose observance is optional, that our consciences may not be constrained by any necessity to observe them but may remember that by God's beneficence their use is for edification made subject to him."[65]

While Calvin is able to set forth the concept of adiaphora in two pages of the Institutes, he finds it necessary to launch into a more detailed discussion of the potential dangers involved in this aspect of Christian freedom. Here Calvin argues against those who interpret Christian freedom as an excuse to give free reign to their passions, so as to abuse God's gifts. Under the pretext of Christian freedom, individuals take delight in lavish banquets, bodily apparel, domestic architecture, and private elegance. Calvin states:

> They say that those are things indifferent, I admit it, provided they are used indifferently. But when they are coveted too greedily, when they are proudly boasted of, when they are lavishly squandered, things that were of themselves otherwise lawful are certainly defiled by these vices.[66]

The only solution to the problem is to recognize that God requires controlled desires and constant moderation in all things; therefore, every man should live in his station, "whether slenderly, moderately, or plentifully," and learn from the Apostle Paul to be content therein.[67]

Furthermore, the indiscriminate use of Christian freedom will certainly offend one's weak brothers. Thus, the Genevan church member who insists on eating meat on Friday, as a display of his freedom, has not yet learned that "it makes no difference in God's sight whether they eat meat or eggs, wear red or black clothes."[68] Any action that causes the weak to stumble must be condemned. On the other hand, one must not worry about offending those legalists who have no understanding of Christian freedom, for Jesus and Paul taught the early Christians to ignore the criticism of the Pharisees. A good example of this policy can be seen in Paul's circumcising Timothy to please the weak brethren, while refusing to circumcise Titus at the demand of those who were "false brethren." But Calvin adds a cautious note, which is consistent with his entire ethic, that one must never, on the pretext of love of neighbor, offend against God. For purity of faith is the primary responsibility, while love of neighbor comes second, and individual Christian freedom third.[69]

It can be seen from this discussion that Calvin's understanding of adiaphora is closely related to his contention that the ceremonial law of the old covenant has been abrogated. It is in this area that one sees the practical difference between the new covenant man and the old covenant man. The reason for this is that, under the Abrahamic covenant ceremonial law, which includes all cultic legislation, was necessary because it foreshadowed something that has now become visible under the new covenant. Calvin uses this concept to launch into wider ethical consideration, such as dress and architecture, but the point is that since Christ has made everything necessary for salvation plainly and visibly known, there is much which is now "indifferent."

In reflecting on his discussion of all three aspects of Christian freedom, Calvin adds an additional warning: "We are not to misapply to the political order the gospel teaching on spiritual freedom."[70] The Christian man lives in two kingdoms, the spiritual and the temporal, and to claim that one's spiritual freedom also involves political freedom, is to commit a grave sin. Christians are still subject to civil laws, even though their consciences are free in the sight of God. Protestant reformers had learned through experience that religious principles could be used by "fanatics" to validate political unrest. Hence, Calvin includes this warning so that his discussion of Christian freedom might not be used in the same way in which the German peasants of the 1520's had seized on some of Luther's concepts in promoting political insurrection.

So that the reader might have in proper focus the uniqueness and importance of Calvin's employment of the pastoral function of the law, it is possible to turn to Luther as a point of contrast. It is certainly true that there are some elements in the ethical thought of Luther and Calvin that are very similar. For instance, Luther states that "it ought to be the first concern of every Christian to lay aside all confidence in works and increasingly to strengthen faith alone and through faith to grow in the knowledge, not of works, but of Jesus Christ."[71] Likewise, in his essay, Two Kinds of Righteousness, Luther explains that primary righteousness is alien righteousness, instilled by Christ, by which the believer is justified, while the second kind of righteousness involves the believer's own righteousness, "not because we alone work it, but because we work with that first and alien righteousness."[72] But there are basic differences, as seen in George W. Forell's statement that the basic methodological principle underlying Luther's thought is that "actions, faculties, beings, and standards are good or evil not in a static sense, so that if their value is once described it will hold true forever, but in a dynamic sense, i.e., according to their function of helping or hindering the all-important relationship between God and man."[73] Calvin wishes to argue that God has published standards of obedience that are static, eternal, and inviolable, and for this reason the moral law of the one covenant is as valid today as it was in the time of Moses. Calvin agrees with Luther that it is the faith that exists in the heart of the believer that allows him to be a doer of works. But Calvin disagrees with Luther's understanding that good works follow "spontaneously" from faith. While for Luther, love is the chief characteristic of the man of faith and the chief virtue of the saint, for Calvin it is holiness, which implies the necessity of striving toward perfect obedience, even though perfection is impossible. Love cannot be done out of constraint, argues Luther, while Calvin contends that without the constraining influence of the law, holiness cannot be achieved. In his commentary on Galatians, Luther makes it very clear that he rejects the pastoral function of the law, maintaining that this emphasis comes close to a kind of legalism. In this commentary, Luther separates gospel and law, the new covenant and the old covenant, so that what he considers to be the unique Christian freedom that Christ has given the Christian will not be subverted. Where there is faith, the law is dead, and only love in response to faith remains. Elsewhere, Luther writes that "it is clear, then, that a Christian has all that he needs in faith and needs no works to justify him; and if he has no need of works, he has no need of the law; and if he has no need of the law, surely he is free from the law."[74]

Therefore, Luther's position is that when one talks about ethics one must not begin by discussing those obligations that God has set before man, but rather by confessing the inner change that occurs in the Christian. The man who has true faith has the virtue of love: "From faith thus flow forth love and joy in the Lord, and from love a joyful, willing, and free mind that serves one's neighbor willingly and takes no account of gratitude or ingratitude, of praise or blame of gain or loss."[75] The essence of doing good works is love toward one's neighbor. Luther would be unwilling to ask the Calvinistic question: which is more obligatory, love of God or love of neighbor?

Calvin develops an ethic of obligation since he sees holiness to be the primary bond between man and God, and to become holy one must be obedient to the eternal standards that God has set forth. Man cannot do this by his own power, so God out of his infinite mercy provided a way by which man's evil will could be replaced with a good will, thereby giving him a power through which he could strive towards holiness. But this striving would be impossible if there were not external laws which have remained in force throughout the entire history of the one covenant, prodding and stinging the believer who has been adopted into the covenant, so that he will not waver in the goal that is set before him. According to Calvin's theology, victory lies in the future and not in the past. Salvation is a fact accomplished, but one lives under the promise that it has been accomplished for him, and the benefits cannot really be felt until one is, like Christ, drawn out of this world and into the next. In the meantime, one has the law, and the believer's primary responsibility in the present life is to conform oneself to the image of Christ, who is the soul of the law, so that one will be worthy of his future inheritance.

C. The Life of Obedience

It is now possible to turn to an examination of the practical application that Calvin gives to the pastoral function of the law. The reader should keep in mind the opinion expressed earlier in this chapter, that Calvin's ethic is intricately involved in the problem of assurance regarding one's status before God. We have noted that the final proof of salvation is given in the gospel of John: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples," and have studied the implications of this proof for Calvin's understanding of faith. The possibility of a close relationship between this proof and Calvin's ethic should be kept in mind in the following discussion of Calvin's doctrine of the Christian life. Later in the chapter, an attempt will be made to reach a conclusion regarding the role that correct morality plays in establishing assurance of salvation.

Calvin's ethic is a scriptural ethic, for he is convinced that through a reading of the Old and New Testaments one can find "a pattern for the conduct of life." Instead of arguing that one is free to do anything that the Bible does not prohibit, Calvin contends that "there is nothing more opposite to the purity of religion than to do anything which is not enjoined" therein.[76] Thus scripture provides everything that is necessary for a well developed ethic. Calvin discusses the essential content of his scriptural ethic in Book Three, Chapters Seven through Ten, of the Institutes. By summarizing the important concepts in this section, one is in a position to better establish the relationship between Calvin's ethic and his covenant theology.

The first major theme that Calvin develops is that of "self-denial." Man is not his own master; this reality is the foundation of all ethical thought. Calvin writes:

> We are not our own: let not our reason nor our will therefore sway our plans and deeds. We are not our own: let us therefore not set it as our goal to seek what is expedient for us according to the flesh. We are not our own: in so far as we can, let us therefore forget ourselves and all that is ours.[77]

Since man was made for God, he must "think, speak, meditate, and do, nothing except to his glory."[78] Thus, man must apply "the whole force of his ability" in the work of the Lord, denying his own will and seeking only the will of God. In order to grasp the significance of Calvin's doctrine of self-denial, one must keep in mind his understanding that the self has become totally perverted through sin. Calvin writes that those who have said "that original sin is 'concupiscence' have used an appropriate word, if only it be added . . . that whatever is in man, from the understanding to the will, from the soul even to the flesh, has been defiled and crammed with this concupiscence."[79] The Christian is involved in spiritual warfare, attempting to subdue the passions of sin. Jesus is the perfect model and example for the Christian in this process of mortification. Jesus practiced a life of total self-denial, surrendering his will to the Father's will, even to dying on the cross. It is a sign of making great progress in the warfare, if one will subordinate his self-concern in order to devote himself with total zeal "to God and his commandments."[80] One must give up all ambition and craving for human glory.[81]

According to Titus, correct ethical behavior, resulting from self-denial, consists of soberness, righteousness, and godliness. Soberness, argues Calvin, includes chastity, temperance, pure and frugal use of temporal goods, and patience in poverty. Righteousness includes fulfilling the duties of equity, rendering to each his own. And godliness includes all things that are holy, separated from the iniquities of the world. "When these things are joined together by an inseparable bond," argues Calvin, "they bring about complete perfection."[82]

Only through self-denial can one have the right attitude toward his fellow men. For self-love leads one to censure the character and morals of others, and if this reaches the point of conflict, "venom bursts forth," and one's inter-personal relationships are destroyed. The only solution is to divest oneself of self-love by unremittingly examining his faults, thereby calling himself back to humility.[83] Only through self-denial can one fulfill his duty to his neighbor. The duty to love our neighbor was commanded by God for this very reason, that one will give up self-love.[84] Furthermore, one is not to love his neighbor with any consideration of their merit; rather, one has a duty to love him because he too was made in the image of God. Also, one must remember that the work itself is not the most important thing, for the motivation behind the act of love must be pure.

But the essential aspect of self-denial involves the Christian's relationship to God, rather than neighbor, for "Scripture calls us to resign ourselves and all our possessions to the Lord's will, and to yield to him the desires of our hearts to be tamed and subjugated."[85] One cannot be a faithful Christian and covet wealth, property, authority, and prestige. If the Christian should remain in a state of poverty, he must trust in the ultimate goodness of God, and relish the spiritual peace that he gives. This way of life "leads to his salvation," and that is the only reality of importance.[86]

The second theme that Calvin develops in his description of the Christian life, is that of "bearing the cross," which he sees as being an aspect of self-denial. Those whom God has adopted must expect a "hard, toilsome, and unquiet life, crammed with very many and various kinds of evil."[87] One learns obedience through suffering, and therefore God submits all of his children to the test of faith. The believer has Christ as the perfect example of how to be patient amidst suffering. In interpreting this doctrine of Calvin, Wallace writes:

> Since we are destined to be conformed to Christ, we must expect to have to bear the cross as He did. What Jesus Christ suffered must be fulfilled in all His members. It is only right that the course which God has begun with Christ the first-born He should continue with all His children. If we expect ultimately to share in heavenly glory with Christ we must not be surprised if He allots us the same hard way of entering into glory as He Himself took. If our Lord's obedience had to be tested and proved in suffering, we should expect our own obedience to be so tested.[88]

Since Christ had no need to undertake the bearing of the cross except to attest and prove his obedience to the Father, the Christian must learn to look upon suffering as a way to demonstrate one's obedience and desire to strive toward holiness. God sometimes afflicts the believer with poverty, bereavement, disease, or other calamities, so that he will remember that without Christ he is nothing, and from this experience his trust in God will deepen, being resolved to henceforth rely totally on the grace of God. Through trials and tribulations, the individual can experience anew the faithfulness of God, and therefore cling all the more to his promise concerning salvation. Calvin summarizes this by stating:

> It is no slight importance for you to be cleansed of your blind love of self that you may be made more nearly aware of your incapacity; to feel your own incapacity that you may transfer your trust to God; to rest with a trustful heart in God that, relying upon his help, you may persevere unconquered to the end; to take your stand in his grace that you may comprehend the truth of his promises; to have unquestioned certainty of his promises that your hope may thereby be strengthened.[89]

Thus we see that through obedience comes certainty of the validity of God's promises. Total obedience involves by necessity relying on God's grace, and through that experience the sense of hope increases.

Calvin also views suffering as God's chastisement of the believer, prompting the individual to acknowledge past transgressions. Therefore "whenever we are afflicted, remembrance of our past life ought immediately to come to mind; so we shall doubtless find that we have committed something deserving this sort of chastisement."[90] But one must recognize that there is a purpose in this punishment. God is acting with kindness and generosity, for punishment demonstrates that he never ceases "to promote our salvation." Without discipline "we are illegitimate children, not sons."[91] This indeed is the difference between unbelievers and believers: the former refuse God's chastisement, while the latter welcome it in order to become more obedient.[92] God creates turmoil and suffering so that the individual will be helped along on the road to salvation, by creating within him the desire to give up himself, and follow God's will, as it is given in the law. The individual who does not engage in this disciplined life, demonstrates that he is an unbeliever, and not one of God's elect. Here one finds the motivating power behind Calvin's ethic. Motivation for a disciplined life stems not only from the desire to respond to God's unconditional promise with radical obedience, but also from an awareness that the promises apply to him only as he lives a disciplined life of obedience. He who is not sanctified must not have experienced the grace of God. Ethical behavior demonstrates that one has been elected to salvation, for the reprobate lacks a new will, and in spite of even the best intentions, the reprobate will be unsuccessful in the practice of biblical morality. Calvin seeks always to protect the doctrines of the grace of God and the impotency of human will, while attaching to the covenantal relationship between God and man a conditional aspect. Although the believer, should he persevere in his obedience to God, must give God all the credit, if he fails, he has only himself to blame. Quoting from Leviticus, Calvin states: "Let this dreadful warning terrify us: 'If you happen to walk contrary to me, I will also happen to walk contrary to you.'"[93] The covenant is unconditional in that God did not grant the promise of salvation because of human merit; rather, only the goodness of God prompted his intervention into human history and the election of some individuals to salvation. Likewise, without the grace of God, sanctification is impossible. But the covenant is conditional in that the promises can be fulfilled for the individual only as he responds by denying himself, bearing his cross, and living a life that is dedicated to the law. But such behavior is possible only if one has been elected to salvation; therefore, ethical behavior becomes important in determining if one belongs to the particular elect. This latter emphasis is derived from Calvin's conception of the one covenant in the history of salvation; the promises by which Abraham lived are the same promises by which the Christian lives. Salvation, although it begins in the present moment, can be achieved only in the life to come.

The third major theme in Calvin's description of the Christian life involves "meditation on the future life." Not only does the believer, through God's chastisement, seek to apply himself anew to obedience, he also learns to turn his eyes away from this world, in order to contemplate the heavenly blessing that awaits him.[94] God plagues the believer with "wars, or robberies, or other injuries," so that he will be instructed in the vanity of the present life.[95] Also, in order that men will not "too complacently take delight in the goods of marriage, [God] either causes them to be troubled by the depravity of their wives or humbles them by evil offspring, or afflicts them with bereavement."[96] One cannot meditate on future life unless he be imbued with contempt for the present life. Contempt does not mean that one will not feel gratitude to God for the good things that life offers; rather, it means that the present life is transient and unsatisfying. For "the Lord has ordained that those who are one day to be crowned in heaven should first undergo struggles on earth in order that they may not triumph until they have overcome the difficulties of war, and attained victory."[97] In this quotation one again sees Calvin's emphasis on the idea that victory can be achieved only in the life beyond death, after one has waged a successful battle against self-love and love of this world. By meditating on this future victory, one gains strength in the present battles. The more joyfully one awaits the day of his death, the more progress he has made in the school of Christ. Also, the comfort that comes from meditating on future victory, allows the believer to better endure the prosperity of the wicked, whose delights are short-lived.

These three aspects of "scriptural morality," renunciation of the self, bearing one's cross, and meditation of the future life, form the central motifs in Calvin's ethic. But Calvin also gives the reader of the _Institutes_ various rules by which to regulate the use of earthly things. The basic principle of his social ethic is: "The use of God's gifts is not wrongly directed when it is referred to that end to which the author himself created and destined them for us, since he created them for our good, not for our ruin."[98] From this principle, Calvin sets forth four basic rules regarding the use of material goods. First, one will act correctly if he continually exercises the attitude of "contempt of the present life and meditation upon heavenly immortality."[99] This attitude will allow one to not indulge in material things, so that one will "with unflagging effort of mind . . . insist upon cutting off all show of superfluous wealth, not to mention licentiousness, and diligently guard against turning helps into hindrances."[100] Secondly, one must practice the rule of moderation in all things. If one follows this rule, he will again "make considerable progress in the Lord's school." Thirdly, one must continually keep in mind that the things of this earth were entrusted to man, and therefore everyone must one day render account of them to God. God commends abstinence, sobriety, frugality, and moderation, while hating excess, pride, ostentation and vanity, as scripture teaches.[101] Fourthly, one must practice his calling, and seek to order

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his life around that calling. Calvin writes that "lest through our stupidity and rashness everything be turned topsy-turvy, he has appointed duties for every man in his particular way of life. And that no one may thoughtlessly transgress his limits, he has named these various kinds of living 'callings.'"[102] It should be noted, however, that "Calvin does not go to the length of teaching that if a man is born in one station and calling in life he cannot possibly seek to change it."[103] Rather, the emphasis of this rule is that each individual has been called by God to fulfill some useful function in "the life of the social body to which he belongs."[104] Nevertheless, one should not seek to exceed the "bounds" of his general calling. In this manner social chaos will be avoided.

As a way of summarizing this discussion of the essential practical content of Calvin's ethic, it should be mentioned that there is a consistent tension in Calvin's thought between fear and hope. The reader has already observed that fear plays an important role in Calvin's theology. It has been noted, for instance, that repentance cannot proceed unless there is within the soul of man an earnest fear of God, stemming from the contemplation of the demands of God and man's inability to measure up to those demands. Calvin expresses this in his commentary on Exodus 19: ". . . the sinner will never be capable of pardon until he learns to tremble from consciousness of his guilt, nay, until confounded with dread he lies like one dead before the tribunal of God."[105] But fear continues to play a key role in the life of the believer. In fact, the best way to ensure the development of self-denial, bearing one's cross, and meditation on the future life, is to fear the response of God if one should fail. The "right kind" of fear occurs when "believers, considering that the examples of divine wrath executed upon the ungodly as warning to them, take special care not to provoke God's wrath against them by the same offenses."[106] Fear of the Lord is "the sum of the law."[107] If fear is lessened, the law is broken, and God will respond with the appropriate chastisement. Thus, Calvin states that fear "is the surest shield for resisting all temptations, and a firm support to uphold our minds from wavering in seasons of danger."[108] Lack of the right kind of fear is symptomatic of the Christian who does not show gratitude to God, and as noted, Calvin has a tendency to equate ingratitude with unbelief. But the chief function of fear in the life of the believer is that it creates within the individual the proper frame of mind so that he will rely on the grace of God, thereby gaining the power that will allow him to proceed in the task of being an obedient servant.

Fear can only remain "right fear" because God, through the mediatory work of Christ, has given the believer hope in blessed immortality.[109] The work accomplished by Christ is apprehended only through faith and hope: "Neither wealth, nor power, nor any other temporal gift is promised to the sons of the Spirit, but an eternal blessing, which is possessed only by hope, in this world."[110] Hope "is nothing else than the expectation of those things which faith has believed to have been truly promised by God."[111] Therefore, while faith believes God to be true, "hope awaits the time when his truth shall be manifested . . . faith believes that eternal life has been given to us, hope anticipates that it will some time be revealed."[112] Hope and fear exist side by side in the heart of the believer. While fear encourages one toward self-denial and cross-bearing, hope stimulates the meditation of future immortality. Thus, hope and fear are the attitudes necessary for the cultivation of Christian morality.

The importance that Calvin grants to fear and hope must be viewed from the perspective of his covenant theology. Hope achieves its importance from the fact that victory lies in the future. The constant reminder in Calvin's theology that the benefits that Christ has earned cannot be experienced until one sheds his flesh, automatically focuses one's attention on the future. It has been noted that in Calvin's theology, the idea of the postponement of victory for the individual till after death is the result of his covenant theology; the promise of salvation that is the object of the Christian's faith is the same promise that was the object of the old covenant saint. Both focus on the future.

Fear achieves its importance in Calvin's thought from the conditional accessories that Calvin believes are attached to the covenant. God demands obedience, and one can be sure that the covenant promises are not intended for him unless his life conforms to those demands. Calvin views life as a kind of test for the believer, with the goal being the cultivation of a holy and disciplined life. The sufferings which the believer must endure do not occur by chance; they are either chastisements for previous failure, or an attempt to teach the believer greater humility and the necessity of relying solely on God. It is a psychological truth that fear involves insecurity, and the insecurity which Calvin admits exists in every believer, is heightened by the conditional aspect of the covenant, which involves the demand for obedient living. This obedience is possible only if the individual has been elected to salvation. That is, reliance on the grace of Christ makes possible obedient living. Therefore, he whose life does not reflect scriptural morality, must not be a member of the particular elect.

This problem raises once again the whole question of

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certainty of salvation in Calvin's theology. Calvin has a revealing statement about his understanding of assurance:

> But 'assurance' I do not understand to mean that which soothes our mind with sweet and perfect repose, releasing it from every anxiety. For to repose so peacefully is the part of those who, when all affairs are flowing to their liking, are touched by no care, burn with no desire, toss with no fear. But for the saints the occasion that best stimulates them to call upon God is when distressed by their own need, they are troubled by the greatest unrest, and are almost driven out of their sense, until faith opportunely comes to their relief. For among such tribulations God's goodness so shines upon them that even when they groan with weariness under the weight of present ills, and also are troubled and tormented by the fear of greater ones, yet, relying upon his goodness, they are relieved of the difficulty of bearing them, and are solaced and hope for escape and deliverance. It is fitting therefore that the godly man's prayer arises from these two emotions (assurance of God's favor, yet being fully aware of his just vengeance), that it also contain and represent both.[113]

Thus, the Christian life involves a struggle between fear and hope, unbelief and belief. Assurance in Calvin's theology is anything but constant. One sees in the above quotation Calvin's understanding of man's spiritual moods: when the believer is troubled by doubt, he calls upon God for deliverance, and faith is strengthened, only to find this new assurance being attacked by doubts once again. Calvin wishes to say that the believer is aware of both the mercy of God toward the individual, and God's just vengeance in punishing wrongdoing. But to which group does one belong? To those who receive the punishment of God, or to those who will receive the full favor of God's mercy? Those covenant members elected to salvation will not fall. But how can one gain assurance that he belongs to the particular elect? This question becomes extremely important in light of the struggle between fear and hope, unbelief and belief, in even the best of saints.

In the twenty-fourth chapter of Book Three of the _Institutes_, Calvin argues that if one is looking for the certainty of his election, he must be content with the promises of scripture. John 5:24 teaches that "he who believes in [Christ] is said to have passed out of death into life."[114] Therefore, "all whom he receives, the father is said to have entrusted and committed to him to keep unto eternal life . . . if we desire to know whether God cares for our salvation, let us inquire whether he has entrusted us to Christ, whom he has established as the sole savior of all his people."[115] Thus, if the individual has embraced Christ, God has promised to "reckon us in his flock and enclose us within his fold."[116] From this perspective, election seems sure.

But Calvin immediately adds in the next paragraph that "anxiety about our future state steals in; for Paul teaches that they are called who were previously chosen, so Christ shows that "many are called but few are chosen."[117] Paul warns against "over-assurance." According to Romans

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11:21-23, God can cut one off so that he may engraft others. "Finally, we are taught," states Calvin, "that call and faith are of little account unless perseverance be added; and this does not happen to all." Yet, Christ promises that "no one shall snatch them out of my hand." The solution to the problem, according to Calvin, is found in I John 2:19: "If they had been of us, they would not have gone out from us." Thus, those who are truly elected cannot fall. This indeed is one aspect of the covenant of grace. Therefore, when "it daily happens that those who seem to be Christ's fall away from him again, and hasten to destruction," one must say that these people never really cleaved to Christ, even though "they have signs of a call that are similar to those of the elect."[118] There is then a great deal of suspense in the life of the covenant member; fear and hope are constantly intermingled. While the safekeeping of the elect is sure, how can one be sure he is of the elect? Is one a recipient of God's particular election, or just general election? The import of this for the present discussion is that, in Calvin's thought, proper ethical living takes on great importance since obedience to the law, as will be demonstrated shortly, strengthens faith, and is a sign of the in-dwelling Spirit of God.

Various scholars have attempted to find the solution to the problem of assurance in Calvin's doctrine of election and providence. Charles Hall writes:

> . . . Christians rest on God's providence, since this doctrine teaches that the devil and his whole army are powerless to do anything against God's people without the permission and even the command of God. It is most comforting to be certain that although God arms them for the testing of his people, he also fixes the limit of their fury. God's predestination of the elect to eternal life applies still more directly to the struggle which they experience now. The Christian's struggle--no matter how difficult and precarious his position may become--cannot mean that this salvation could be overthrown for that depends solely on God's eternal election.[119]

This position is also expressed by Wilhelm Niesel when he states that Calvin

> develops a doctrine of election because he feels constrained to do so obediently to the word of scripture. But he was also clear about the fact that the Bible not only offers a number of indications about the choice of God, but in so doing wishes to communicate something of decisive importance . . . . The doctrine of election alone makes the certitude of salvation a living efficacious reality; for when we see that God gives to us what He refuses to others, then we come to realize that our salvation truly flows from the spring of His pure mercy . . . . Thus Calvin considers that the assurance of salvation only becomes real and effective as the assurance of election. And yet the latter . . . is not to be divorced from the security of Christ, that security which Christ as the Good Shepherd affords us.[120]

This position, which has been quite common in twentieth-century scholarship, seeks to play down an interpretation of Calvin that would try to demonstrate that there is a close relationship in Calvin's thought between ethical behavior and assurance of salvation. Scholars such as

Niesel, Hall, and Forstman contend that assurance comes only through the experience of faith, which allows one to know that God's word concerning election and perseverance are directed toward him.[121] In discussing Calvin's commentary on I John, Niesel writes:

> Our works, Calvin means, are not the real foundation of our salvation, nor are they--and this concerns us more closely--the ground of our recognition of it; for it is not the tokens of God's grace, which include our good works, which assure us of salvation and of our being in a state of grace; that is the work of Christ alone. However much our works as tokens of the grace of God contribute to our certainty of salvation, its sole and sufficient ground is Christ alone.[122]

Likewise, Niesel states:

> Calvin felt able to admit that our works may become a sign of our godliness provided that in Christ we have previously gained assurance of salvation. But he emphatically called attention to the great danger of the Syllogismus practicus . . . . Our salvation is grounded solely and exclusively in the mercy of God, which is to say in Christ. Hence we recognize that He alone is the Author of our salvation, who gives us the certainty of final deliverance.[123]

It must be admitted that this argument picks up one strong thread in Calvin's discussion of the problem of assurance. The present chapter began with a discussion of Calvin's understanding of the faith experience, and the kind of assurance that is derived from that experience. We observed that Calvin argues that through faith the Holy Spirit establishes and seals in the hearts of believers the assurance of their adoption. Thus, the Spirit "is a pledge of salvation that cannot deceive us."[124] Behind Calvin's discussion of faith, election, and perseverance in Book Three of the Institutes lies his overwhelming conviction that there is nothing that man can do by himself to obtain salvation. This point must be granted, for Calvin's thought always focuses on the merciful God who chooses some individuals to salvation. Likewise, in determining if one has been so elected, Calvin frequently suggests that such assurance comes through the experience of faith, in which the believer seizes upon the promises of God's Word.

But twentieth-century Calvin scholarship has given insufficient recognition to Calvin's conviction that even the reprobate can have a type of faith experience. Calvin writes:

> For though only those predestined to salvation receive the light of faith and truly feel the power of the gospel, yet experience shows that the reprobate are sometimes affected by almost the same feeling as the elect, so that even in their own judgment they do not in any way differ from the elect.[125]

Furthermore, we have seen that even the elect, let alone the hypocritical reprobate, is periodically seized with doubt: ". . . believers are in perpetual conflict with their own unbelief."[126] The experience of faith, however powerful it may be, never fully satisfies the need for certainty. Thus, Calvin argues that the reprobate "have signs of a call that are similar to those of the elect" even though the level of confidence among the latter may not be as great.[127]

In his commentary on I John, Calvin remarks that "it cannot be but that every one who really fears and obeys God, knows him in his Word."[128] Saving knowledge of God apart from scripture is impossible, and thus faith does play a crucial role in granting assurance of salvation. But also, one can know that he knows God, if he is able to live an obedient life. It has been noted that consistency in faith and the practice of biblical morality appears to be the clue for understanding Calvin's notion of assurance. Those who persevere are indeed the elect. While the reprobate may have something of the experience of faith, that faith does not achieve fruition. "No man is a believer," Calvin writes, "except him who, leaning upon the assurance of his salvation, confidently triumphs over the devil and death."[129] One needs assurance of his experience of assurance, and that comes through obedient living according to the law. "If election has as its goal holiness of life, it ought rather to goad us eagerly to set our mind upon it than to serve as a pretext for doing nothing."[130] The reprobate will ultimately be unable to live the life of obedience, to engage in self-denial as required by the moral law, to ward off the temptations of the devil, for the reprobate does not have the grace of Christ within him. Therefore, it becomes a psychological necessity for the

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covenant member to pay close attention to his ethical behavior, for in this realm faith achieves its fruition.[131]

This discussion points out the fact that recent scholarship has failed to see the conditional aspect in Calvin's covenant theology. The mutual nature of the covenant means that unless the covenant member lives a life of holiness his "malice shall cut off the course of God's goodness."[132] Likewise, Calvin states " . . . think not but that your God can drive you out of his heart and out of his church, if he find you unworthy of the benefit which he has offered to you."[133] Even reprobates can experience the general election of God, having been baptized into the church. Since fear remains in the life of the covenant member, the individual experience of faith cannot alone suffice in granting assurance of election. The believer is thrown back into the realm of morality in order to gain certainty of his election. If he fails in this realm, he must come to recognize that his original experience of faith, however real it may have seemed, was only a shadow of that which the elect experience. Calvin's emphasis on the necessity of morality does not deny the doctrine that one is justified by faith alone, since Calvin is convinced that good works in no way are involved in the process by which one obtains salvation. Obedience follows the experience of faith through the work of the Holy Spirit and the law. The point that is being made is that obedience becomes a criterion for determining whether one has obtained forgiveness of sins. Justification without sanctification is impossible; therefore the life that is lived obediently serves as a sign that justification has occurred, and that the individual is indeed a recipient of God's particular election.

Thus, the experience of faith fails to provide adequate assurance of salvation. Three important motifs in Calvin's thought have led to this conclusion.

First, the new covenant believer, like his old covenant counterpart, remains a sinner, suffering from doubt and temptation which stems from the "cinder of evil" that remains in him. This means, in practical terms, that the Holy Spirit, whom the believer has come to know in the state of faith, is insufficient in forming the soul of man to do that which is righteous. The law becomes necessary, "for, however eagerly they may in accordance with the Spirit strive toward God's righteousness, the listless flesh always so burdens them that they do not proceed with due readiness . . . . Even for a spiritual man not yet free of the weight of the flesh the law remains a constant sting that will not let him stand still."[134] In addition to the Spirit, a second image-making force is necessary, one that is objective, one that serves as "a whip to an idle and balky ass,"

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and that is the law.

Secondly, Calvin's motif that victory lies in the future rather than in the present, means that the experience of faith is separated from the most important rewards that can come from that experience. Salvation has been accomplished by Christ, but one lives under the suspenseful expectation that it has been accomplished for him, and the benefits cannot really be known until one is, like Christ, drawn out of this world and into the next. Thus, the new covenant man, like the old covenant saint, focuses his attention on the future. Suspense, expressed theologically in Calvin's doctrine of the intermingling of fear and hope, becomes a psychological necessity.

Thirdly, Calvin's doctrine of the conditional accessories attached to the covenant results in the position that there is an objective way to ascertain one's probable status before God. The appropriate ethic has been derived from the moral law. If one deviates from that law, God's chastisement is likely to be experienced. If so, one must recognize that God is seeking to promote his salvation. But correction is necessary, for without obedience the believer fails to live up to the covenant obligations. The individual who is unable to engage in a disciplined life, who is through the decree of God denied access to the grace of Christ, demonstrates that he is not a true believer, and hence not of the particular elect.

Thus, it becomes possible to understand Calvin's proclamation that "the more earnestly any man measures his life by the standard of God's law, the surer are the signs of repentance that he shows."[135] Here one sees the Hebraic background of Calvin's theology: victory lies in the future rather than in the present; the moral law of the old covenant is of utmost importance since man cannot, through the Spirit alone, achieve the kind of obedience God demands; the covenant contains conditional aspects which must be fulfilled if the believer is to achieve the benefits Christ has earned. However important the experience of faith may be, and the certainty that is derived from it, the believer is eventually forced to gain his solace from the way in which his life measures up to the moral law associated with God's covenant with his elect.[136]

D. Limitations and Benefits of Strict Obedience to the Law

At this point in the chapter it is necessary to determine what consequences come to the believer through a life of obedience to the law. It is important to investigate both the limitations and the blessings that come to one who practices scriptural morality. We begin by first turning to the limitations.

The first limitation, which stems from the wickedness in man, is that ethical behavior even in the most saintly of men can never be the cause of justification. Calvin is consistent in this aspect of his anti-scholasticism: "Faith righteousness so differs from works righteousness that when one is established the other has to be overthrown."[137] Even spiritual works account for nothing when the power of justifying is ascribed to faith. Since the believer cannot fulfill the covenant obligations with all his heart, mind, and soul, he must realize that the covenant promises are fulfilled for the believer out of God's abundant mercy.

Secondly, and this is closely associated with the first point, if one believes that the fulfillment of the covenant promises depends upon his own merit, then "the promise will be void and without force."[138] The sanctified Christian continues to live by faith, relying on the indwelling of the Spirit. The sanctified believer engages in good works, and this is possible only through the Spirit that is at work within him.

Thirdly, obedience to the law cannot by itself grant peace of conscience. Calvin states that "Paul consistently denies that peace of quiet joy are retained in consciences unless we are convinced that we are justified by faith."[139] Peace and joy flow from the awareness that the extension of God's mercy does not depend on human merit. Good works without faith account for nothing.

These three limitations of the life of obedience result from Calvin's understanding of the unconditional nature of God's covenant promise. God acts to save man because he is a merciful God, not because there is any merit in man to warrant this gracious activity.

But there are some very important blessings that come to the saint, who through the grace of Christ is able to live a righteous life. First, true obedience supports and strengthens one's faith. Calvin mentions that the holy men of old, found "comfort and confidence in examining the purity of their own conscience" before God. This was possible because "a conscience so founded, erected, and established is established also in the consideration of works, so far, that is, as these are testimonies of God dwelling and ruling in us."[140] When one rules out all meritorious work, while seeing that the Spirit has been at work in him so that he has become obedient, his faith in God's promises pertaining to himself are strengthened. Calvin writes: "We do not forbid [the saint] from undergirding and strengthening this faith by signs of the divine benevolence toward him. For if, when all the gifts God has bestowed upon us are called to mind, they are like rays of the divine countenance by which we are illumined to contemplate that supreme light of goodness; much more is this true of the grace of good works, which shows that the Spirit of adoption has been given to us."[141] Thus the performance of the law by the believer is a sign that he has been truly adopted, and thereby the believer gains assurance.[142] The fruits of regeneration are "proof" of the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit. Also, it should be noted that this strengthening of faith permits the believer to be victorious over temptation and doubt. Thus the value of a disciplined life permits the saint to press on. But the saint must always remember that the ability to live a holy life does not lie with the individual but with God. One must not, therefore, vaunt his works before God, but rather say with Augustine: "For whatever good works are mine, are from thee."

A second benefit comes to the obedient believer, in that the "final cause" of salvation involves the fact that through his generosity, God rewards the good works of believers as if they were meritorious. While the efficient cause of salvation consists in the Father extending the covenant, and the material cause involves the Son's obedience, and the instrumental cause consists of the activity of the Holy Spirit, the final cause involves the fact that "those who the Lord has destined by his mercy for the inheritance of eternal life he leads into possession of it, according to his ordinary dispensation, by means of good works."[143] Good works only come after election and justification, and therefore scripture sometimes derives eternal life from works, without ascribing it to them.[144] Calvin writes: "I . . . admit that what the Lord has promised in his law to the keepers of righteousness and holiness is paid to the works of believers, but in this repayment we must always consider the reason that wins favor for these works."[145] There are three reasons why believers works win God's favor: (1) they are the works of believers who have been freely reconciled to God through faith; (2) they are works that receive their value from God's generosity, for intrinsically they carry no such value; (3) these works are received by God with pardon, thus overlooking their imperfection.[146] Calvin writes:

> For everything imperfect in [the good works] is covered by Christ's perfection . . . . Therefore, after the guilt of all transgression that hinder man from bringing forth anything pleasing to God has been blotted out, and after the fault of imperfection . . . is buried, the good works done by believers are accounted righteous, or what is the same thing, are reckoned as righteousness.[147]

Thus, however defective the works of believers might be, they are nevertheless pleasing to God, through the intervention of his grace.[148]

In summary, we have seen that strict obedience to the law has the following limitations: (1) obedience can never be the cause of justification, (2) fulfillment of the covenant promises depends on God's grace, not human merit, (3) obedience without the faith experience cannot grant peace of conscience. The chief benefits that come to the elect through the practice of scriptual morality are (1) the strengthening of faith, since obedience is a sign of one's election to salvation, and (2) heavenly reward, through the generosity and pardoning activity of God.

III. Calvin's Covenantal Ethic

A. The Importance of the Doctrine of the One Unconditional Covenant for Calvin's Ethic

One of the consequences of Calvin's view of the one unconditional covenant in the history of salvation is that law and gospel are brought together in a manner that was foreign to both Luther and the Spiritualists. This union means that in Calvin's theology the differences between the Hebrew saint and the Christian are minimized. The differences between the new and old covenants involve manners of dispensation rather than substance. Thus, the only major difference between the Hebrew saint and the contemporary believer is that the new covenant has brought an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, with the result that regeneration occurs more freely and extensively. But Calvin minimizes the differences. This can be seen in his discussion of Christian freedom. Of the three kinds of Christian freedom, the only one that is peculiar to the Christian is that of adiaphora, for the Hebrew believer, like the Christian, recognized that he could be justified by God only through faith, and that this justification allowed him to perform the works of the law freely and without worrying about works righteousness. The minimizing of differences can also be seen in Calvin's constant rebuttals of Spiritualist thought: spiritual perfection is impossible, life in Christ does not mean neglect of law, the Christian lives by hope just as the Hebrew saint did.

Thus, Calvin argues that there are striking parallels in the life of the Christian man and the life of the Hebrew saint. Both are justified by faith alone, as can be seen so clearly in Calvin's discussion of Abraham. Both have the same object of faith: the covenantal promise of salvation. Calvin argues consistently that the believer, whether Hebrew or Christian, does not yet share in the fulfillment of the promises. The most important benefits that Christ has brought will be known only after one leaves this world. Thus, hope is a central motif in Calvin's theology. Likewise, both Hebrew and Christian are called upon to dedicate their lives to obedient living that will be pleasing to God. The content of scriptural morality, self-denial, bearing the cross, and meditation on the future life, was as applicable to the Hebrew as it is to the Christian. Since the coming of Christ, this ethic has been clarified and elucidated: one now knows more clearly what the life of self-denial entails. Nevertheless, there is no change in substance.

The similarities between Hebrew and Christian in

Calvin's thought are derived from his belief in the unconditional covenant that has been in force throughout the history of salvation. The covenant promises are inviolable, and to receive those promises God elects whom he pleases, without any consideration of human merit. The unilateral aspect of the covenant means that there can be no substantive differences between the Christian and the Hebrew believer. Calvin is a faithful interpreter of the Lutheran principles of sola gratia and sola fide, except that he applies them consistently to believers in the entire history of salvation. Calvin's belief in the one unconditional covenant also results in the concept that the individual, whether the faithful man of old or the Christian of today, who is chosen by God, must out of gratitude conform his life to the will of God, especially as that will is known through the law. One must respond with radical obedience.

In this attempt to minimize the differences between Hebrew and Christian, it can be said that Calvin Christianizes the Hebrew and Hebraizes the Christian. The former endeavor is accomplished by arguing that the old covenant man was justified by faith, knew Christ to be the savior of the world, and lived by the promise of eternal salvation. The latter endeavor is accomplished by insisting that the Hebrew law, minus ceremonial legislation, is covenantal law, and therefore still remains in force for the believer.

Calvin thus was attempting to overturn the basic tendencies of medieval Catholic theology as well as Lutheran theology by upgrading the role of the Abrahamic covenant in the history of salvation. Calvin claims that the incarnational activity of Christ was only one aspect of his work, and was the necessary outcome of the prior all-important work of mediating the Abrahamic covenant.

B. The Importance of the Conditional Accessories of the Covenant for Calvin's Ethic

We have observed that Calvin's doctrine of the covenant of grace focuses not only on the gracious activity of God, but on the kind of life that the saint must and will live. The unconditional nature of the covenant refers to the merciful God who elects some individuals to salvation; the conditional nature of the covenant refers to the kind of morality in which the believer will engage. All members of the covenant are obligated to live up to covenant law; yet only he who is a recipient of God's particular election will succeed in this obligation, for only the elect have experienced the special grace of Christ. Calvin writes: "For we have been adopted as sons by the Lord with this one condition, that our life express Christ, the bond of our adoption. Accordingly, unless we give and devote ourselves to righteousness, we not only revolt from our Creator with wicked perfidy, but we also abjure our Savior himself."[149] The law functions as an image-making tool, helping the believer to mold his life according to the demands of God. One is obligated to the performance of the law, not simply because he must show gratitude, but, more importantly, because holiness is the bond of union between God and man, and without holiness the individual will never be able to taste the benefits that Christ has in store for the true believer. If one is a member of the covenant of grace, and believes his sins have been forgiven, yet fails to live obediently, then that individual must conclude that he is not of the elect. It has been observed that the theoretical foundation of the conditional accessories is the concept that victory lies in the future since the Christian does not yet possess the most important benefits that Christ has earned. The eschatological elements in Calvin's soteriology result in his emphasis on the necessity of obedience, and those eschatological elements are in turn derived from his covenant theology. In his commentary on Genesis, Calvin states:

> Moses intimates that Abraham should become possessed of the grace promised to him, if he instructed his children in the fear of the Lord, and governed his household well. But under the person of one man, a rule common to all the pious is delivered: for they who are negligent in this part of their duty, cast off or suppress, as much as in them lies, the grace of God. Therefore, that the perpetual possession of the gifts of God may remain to us . . . we must beware lest they be lost through our neglect.[150]

It is true the Christian who withstands temptation and doubt, and lives a pious life, must give God all the glory, for it is only through his grace and the in-dwelling power of the Spirit that makes this possible. Yet, in the moral life of the individual, should he not be obedient to the law, he cuts himself off from the covenant blessings that have been offered to all covenant members, thereby proving that he was not elected to salvation.

The conditionality that is included in Calvin's covenant theology contributes to the problem of assurance. We have noted that fear continues to play an important role in the life of the believer. Fear of the Father's chastisement, and being cut off from him, keeps the individual in the position of depending on God and in relying on the instruction that comes through the law. While the experience of grace itself offers some assurance, Calvin recognizes that even the hypocritical reprobate has a similar experience. Therefore, the practice of biblical morality becomes very important in granting assurance, since obedience and discipline are signs of one's election, thereby encouraging faith that the covenantal promise of salvation applies to him. The more teachable one is, the more holy one becomes, and being teachable means that one has, through the grace of Christ, dedicated his life to the law. The life of the true saint is filled with boldness in spite of doubt, and obedience in spite of temptation. Consistency then is the clue to certainty. Thus, correct ethical living takes on great importance because of the conditional element in Calvin's interpretation of the covenant of grace.

Thus, Calvin's ethic is derived from his covenant theology. His obligatory ethic is an ethic that concentrates on the necessity of radical obedience. If one should ask what is the necessity for such strict obedience, Calvin gives two answers. First, one must be obedient out of gratitude for being elected to salvation, and secondly, one must be obedient because the bond of unity between God and man is holiness, which cannot occur without obedience. The full covenantal requirement is faith followed by obedience. While the covenant member may have been baptized into the church, thereby becoming a recipient of God's general election, without a life of true faith and obedience to the law, he would be forced to conclude that he is not a member of the inner circle who have received God's particular election. The first answer is derived from the unconditional aspect of the covenant, while the second is the result of Calvin's understanding of the conditional accessories that are attached to the eternal and inviolable covenant of grace.

In his doctrine of the covenant, Calvin has attempted to unite his understanding of the gracious activity of God with his understanding of the obligations imposed upon one who experiences the mercy of God. These obligations are set forth in scripture. This chapter has attempted to demonstrate the manner in which Calvin upholds the reality of this obligation, while recognizing Calvin's contention that the obligation can be fulfilled only through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. Calvin continually denies the concept of free will, consistently arguing that faith and obedience are possible only through the intervention of divine grace: Abraham was justified by faith alone; regeneration is impossible without the conversion of the will which results from the inward bestowal of grace; in the regenerate, God replaces the evil will with a good will, allowing the individual to strive towards holiness; the elect will live a disciplined life as required by the covenant, not through their own merit, but through the renewing energy of the Spirit.

The problem of assurance of salvation must be seen in light of Calvin's denial of free will. On the one hand, from the perspective of Calvin's doctrine of election, there is a clear distinction between the recipients of God's general and particular elections. Free will or human merit has no role in determining to which group one belongs. The omnipotent but merciful God chooses whom he will. On the other hand, the hypocrite and the saint exist side by side in the covenant of grace. The saint may doubt his salvation, the hypocrite may experience something of the grace of God; both, however, are members of the church. The covenant member recognizes that those who are elected to salvation will persevere, while the hypocrite will eventually stumble, since he lacks the regenerating power of Christ. How is one to know that his experience of faith is genuine, that he is the recipient of God's particular election? According to Calvin, the saint must gain his comfort through the experience of faith and through a life of obedience; holiness demonstrates that justification has occurred. The hypocrite may claim that he has received the forgiveness of God, but unless his life clearly evinces sanctification, he must be deceived. Morality then becomes proof of the work of the Holy Spirit within the individual. Since the successful practice of biblical morality is not a matter of free will, he who lives an obedient life based on the moral law must have been elected to salvation.

The covenantal ethic, therefore, provides a way by which the doctrine of election can be maintained, while providing the theoretical basis for the necessity of obedience. Calvin was faced with the task of encouraging obedience in the lives of the church members of Geneva, all of whom belonged to the covenant of grace. Whether the beneficiary of God's general or particular election, obedience is

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demanded by the covenantal relationship. One's status within the church cannot grant assurance of salvation. To gain that assurance one must seek to find the peculiar and special grace of Christ at work within the individual. Therefore, the practice of biblical morality becomes an important, if not the final criterion, in evidencing one's status before God, for he whose life is sanctified, has received the power of the Holy Spirit. The importance granted to ethics in the Calvinistic tradition, is intimately related to the quest for assurance and security.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

[1] 3:1:3, p. 541.

[2] Ronald S. Wallace, _Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life_ (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1959), p. 22.

[3] Commentary on Exodus 19:10, _FLBM_, trans. C. W. Bingham (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1950), Vol. 1, p. 323 (_C R_, XXIV, 199).

[4] 3:2:2, p. 545.

[5] 3:2:6, p. 549.

[6] Preface to Vol. 1, _FLBM_, pp. xvii-xviii (_C R_, XXIV, 7-8).

[7] 3:2:7, p. 551.

[8] 3:2:11, p. 555.

[9] 3:2:11, p. 555.

[10] 3:2:12, p. 557.

[11] 3:2:14, p. 559.

[12] H. Jackson Forstman, _Word and Spirit: Calvin's Doctrine of Biblical Authority_ (Stanford, California, 1962), p. 125.

[13] 3:2:16, p. 562.

[14] 3:2:17, p. 562. See Forstman, p. 128.

[15] _Ibid_. In regard to Calvin's understanding of faith, Forstman writes that "it is possible to conceive of a

doubt-in-certainty in which both the doubt and the certainty are quite real and true. Only one must be careful not to make too much of this. Even while allowing for doubt in faith, Calvin could argue with characteristic vigor against the 'diabolical opinion' of the Papists 'that we ought to doubt our final perseverance, because we are uncertain whether we shall be tomorrow in the same state of grace . . . . How weak soever we may then be,' he asserts, 'yet our salvation is not uncertain, because it is sustained by God's power. Hence it is security, not only for the present, but also for the future.' There is nothing quite so severe then as Luther's Anfechtungen, his terrible depressions or doubt so often characteristic in the present day, but there is harassment, distraction, a degree of shaking--all against a background of certainty." (pp. 128-129) A response to this position will be given later in the chapter.

[16] See Edward A. Dowey, The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology (New York, 1952), pp. 194-197, for a discussion of Calvin's self-identification with David, as indicated in the preface to his commentary on the Psalms. Dowey writes: "It is an uncommonly revealing biographical note that Calvin, the so-called heartless logician, considered David, the fighting king and poet of the troubled soul, his own nearest counterpart in the Bible," p. 194. For a more contemporary and detailed discussion, see A. Ganoczy, Le jeune Calvin; genèse et évolution de sa vocation réformatrice (Wiesbaden, 1966), Chapter Three, in which Ganoczy, relying frequently on the Preface to the Commentary on Psalms, discusses the problems of conversion, schism and vocation in the life of the young Calvin. Ganoczy contends that Calvin identified himself with Paul in regard to his conversion experience, while identifying himself with David in regard to his religious vocation.

[17] 3:2:20, p. 566.

[18] 3:2:29, p. 575.

[19] 3:2:34, p. 582.

[20] Forstman, p. 68.

[21] 3:3:1, p. 593.

[22] 3:3:2, p. 594.

[23] 3:3:5, p. 597.

[24] 3:3:2, p. 600.

[25] 3:3:19, p. 614.

[26] 3:2:7, p. 551.

[27] 3:3:9, p. 601.

[28] 3:3:10, p. 602.

[29] 3:3:10, p. 603.

[30] For a detailed discussion of Calvin's understanding of spiritual warfare see Charles A. M. Hall, _With the Spirit's Sword_ (Richmond, Virginia, 1968).

[31] 3:3:16, p. 609.

[32] 1:9:1, p. 93.

[33] 1:9:1, p. 95. For an analysis of Calvin's doctrine of Biblical authority, and the manner in which Calvin attempts to bring together Word and Spirit, see Forstman, _Word and Spirit_.

[34] Commentary on Deuteronomy 7:6, _FLBM_, Vol. 1, p. 355 (_C_ _R_, XXIV, 220).

[35] Commentary on Deuteronomy 7:6, _FLBM_, Vol. 1, p. 355 (_C_ _R_, XXIV, 220).

[36] 3:6:3, p. 687.

[37] Ronald Wallace clarifies this point when he writes: "Calvin fully realizes the dangers of this doctrine of the _imitatio Christi_ and is constantly trying to guard

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against them. There are many things which Christ did in which we should not attempt to imitate Him. 'We ought therefore to exercise in this respect a right judgment.' We must remember that we have to conform to Christ not in those actions that are the outcome of His majesty and the expression of His divine nature, such as His fasting forty days, or His cleansing the temple, or His miracles, but rather in faith and patience and obedience--the qualities that are connected with self-denial and cross-bearing" (pp. 42-43).

[38] 3:6:3, p. 687.

[39] To state that natural law is of "secondary importance" is not to suggest that natural law is distinct from the moral law of the covenant. Wallace writes: "There is, for Calvin . . . the closest connexion between the order of nature, the order revealed in the law of God, and the true order of man's life which we see revealed and established in Jesus Christ, in which the Christian man already shares by faith. The Christian life is the expression of such order in the daily life of this world . . . . Therefore Calvin himself . . . does not hesitate to appeal to his hearers and readers to live according to the order of nature and the natural law, as well as according to the gospel. In making such an appeal to the natural order, he is not turning from Jesus Christ and the Scripture to come supposedly possible second and different source of guidance and inspiration. He is rather using the natural realm to illustrate and to fill out the details of the meaning of the law of God for the Christian man. In appealing . . . to men to become truly natural and human, it can never be far from his mind that only in Christ do we have it revealed what is truly natural and human . . . ." (pp. 144-145)

[40] Commentary on Exodus 31:6, *FLBM*, Vol. 3, p. 292 (*C R*, XXV, 59).

[41] 2:3:6, p. 297.

[42] 2:3:11, p. 306.

[43] 2:3:6, p. 297.

[44] 2:7:6, p. 354.

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[45] 2:7:12, p. 360.

[46] 2:7:12, p. 361.

[47] 2:7:13, p. 361.

[48] Commentary on Galatians 3:19, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1957), pp. 99-100 (*C R*, L, 215).

[49] Commentary on Galatians 3:24-25, pp. 109-110 (*C R*, L, 221).

[50] 2:8:10, p. 376.

[51] Commentary on Deuteronomy 10:12, *FLBM*, Vol. 3, pp. 190-191 (*C R*, XXIV, 722).

[52] It is important to recognize that fear is a part of the pastoral as well as the theological function of the law. In regard to the theological function, repentance depends on the individual's fear of God, for only through an adequate understanding of the way in which the individual has failed to live up to the holy demands of God, and the eternal consequences of that disobedience, can the individual move toward repentance. But since the law remains in force for the believer, through its pastoral function, fear also remains a part of the believer's experience. However, as will be noted later, there is a qualitative difference between the fear of the unbeliever and the fear of the believer. Since through the grace of Christ the believer has the hope of immortality, he no longer needs to fear that his sinful nature will result in damnation. Believers thus develop the "right kind" of fear, which "is the surest shield for resisting all temptations, and a firm support to uphold our minds from wavering in seasons of danger." (Commentary on Exodus 1:17, *FLBM*, Vol. 1, p. 33) The right kind of fear occurs when believers, "considering that the examples of divine wrath executed upon the ungodly as warning to them, take special care not to provoke God's wrath against them by the same offenses . . . . For the apostle, by describing the chastisement with which the Lord of old punished the people of Israel, strikes terror into the Corinthians so that they should avoid entangling themselves in like misdeeds. In that way he does not weaken

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their confidence, but only shakes the sluggishness of their flesh, by which faith is commonly more destroyed than strengthened." (3:2:22, p. 568) Thus both fear and hope dwell in the mind of the believer.

[53] 3:7:7, p. 698.

[54] Commentary on Deuteronomy 10:12, FLBM, Vol. 3, p. 191 (C R, XXIV, 721).

[55] Commentary on Exodus 32:27, FLBM, Vol. 3, p. 353 (C R, XXV, 94).

[56] Commentary on Exodus 31:18, FLBM, Vol. 3, p. 328 (C R, XXV, 80).

[57] Commentary on Exodus 31:18, FLBM, Vol. 3, p. 328 (C R, XXV, 80).

[58] Commentary on Deuteronomy 8:5, FLBM, Vol. 1, p. 388 (C R, XXIV, 241).

[59] 2:7:14-15, p. 363.

[60] 2:7:15, p. 364.

[61] 3:19:2, p. 834.

[62] 3:19:4, p. 836.

[63] 3:19:5, p. 837.

[64] 3:19:7, p. 838.

[65] 3:19:8, p. 840.

[66] 3:19:9, p. 841.

[67] Calvin's use of the word "moderation" may at first glance appear to contradict his conviction that every man should live in his station, "whether slenderly, moderately, or plentifully." The contradiction loses its

force through a recognition of Calvin's awareness of the social hierarchy. One must practice moderation regardless of the station in which one lives. Members of the aristocracy have as much obligation to control their desires and to practice moderation as do the peasants. Calvin writes: "Away, then, with uncontrolled desire, away with immoderate prodigality, away with vanity and arrogance--in order that men may with a clear conscience clearly use God's gifts. Where the heart is tempered to this soberness they will have a rule for lawful use of such blessings." (3:19:9, p. 841) God's gifts may vary from one person to another; what counts is the proper use of those gifts, which depends on soberness, control, and moderation.

[68] 3:19:10, p. 842.

[69] 3:19:13, p. 845.

[70] 3:19:15, p. 847.

[71] "The Freedom of a Christian Man," in John Dillenberger, ed., Martin Luther: Selections From His Writings (Garden City, New York, 1961), p. 56.

[72] "Two Kinds of Righteousness," in Dillenberger, p. 88.

[73] George W. Forell, Faith Active in Love (Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1954), pp. 54-55.

[74] "Freedom of a Christian Man," in Dillenberger, p. 58.

[75] "Freedom of a Christian Man," in Dillenberger, p. 76.

[76] Commentary on Exodus 37, FLBM, Vol. 3, p. 305 (C R, XXV, 66-67).

[77] 3:7:1, p. 690.

[78] 3:7:1, p. 690.

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[79] 2:1:8, p. 251. In this section we also have Calvin's definition of original sin: "An hereditary pravity and corruption of our nature, diffused through all the parts of the soul, rendering us obnoxious to the Divine wrath, and producing in us those works which the Scripture calls 'works of the flesh.'"

[80] 3:7:2, p. 691.

[81] After discussing Calvin's ethic, Niesel remarks: "The ethics of Calvin are not negativist; they are rather determined by the fact that we have a living Lord who was crucified and rose again and who will come again as our Savior. In the strictest sense they stem from the principle of the imitation of Christ." (p. 151) Calvin may have a "living Lord who was crucified . . ." but this belief does not mean that his ethics are not "negativist." Calvin's ethic may be determined by his perception of Christ, but if this is the case then his perception may be dependent on something else. One needs to investigate those factors that influenced Calvin's vision of Christ.

[82] 3:7:3, p. 692. Wallace adds a helpful note to this point when he writes that Calvin teaches that "we must not imagine that progress in the Christian life is attained through a quiet and passive yielding to the influence of the Spirit as He quietly molds our whole being into a blessed and harmonious unity with His will and purpose. God's grace and our own nature never come together in such harmony . . . . The truth is rather that the more God obtains the control of our lives the more inward opposition to His rule is aroused within us and therefore the more are we forced to deny the perverse and rebellious natural inclinations which rise up at the presence of God." (p. 59)

[83] 3:7:4, p. 694.

[84] Commentary on Leviticus 19:18, FLBM, Vol. 3, p: 195 (C R, XXIV, 724).

[85] 3:7:8, p. 698.

[86] 3:7:9, p. 700.

[87] 3:8:1, p. 702.

[88] Wallace, p. 44.

[89] 3:8:3, p. 704.

[90] 3:8:6, p. 706.

[91] 3:8:6, p. 706.

[92] 3:8:6, p. 707.

[93] 1:17:8, p. 221.

[94] E. David Willis, in Calvin's Catholic Christology (Leiden, 1966) remarks: "It is accurate to categorize Calvin's ethic as 'other-worldly,' but only if one recognizes that his concentration on the other world is for the purpose of providing an impetus for Christian life in this world." (p. 143)

[95] 3:9:1, pp. 712-713.

[96] 3:9:1, p. 713.

[97] 3:9:3, p. 715.

[98] 3:10:2, p. 720.

[99] 3:10:4, p. 722.

[100] 3:10:4, p. 723.

[101] 3:10:5, p. 723.

[102] 3:10:6, p. 724.

[103] Wallace, p. 154.

[104] Wallace, p. 154.

[105] Commentary on Exodus 19:17, FLBM, Vol. 1, pp. 327-328 (C R, XXIV, 202).

[106] 3:2:22, p. 568.

[107] Commentary on Deuteronomy 6:24, FLBM, Vol. 1, pp. 362-363 (C R, XXIV, 225).

[108] Commentary on Exodus 1:17, FLBM, Vol. 1, p. 33 (C R, XXIV, 17).

[109] Wallace writes: "There is a 'servile and constrained' fear of God such as the wicked have who dread and flee from the judgment of God which they cannot escape and such as those have who serve God because they fear damnation. Such servile fear is cast out of the heart by faith and love. There is, however, a true fear of God which must arise and must remain in the human heart whenever God draws near to man in redeeming grace. This fear Calvin also calls 'reverence.' In contrast to the servile fear which drives us from God, this fear rather inspires us in our trembling to submit ourselves to God in subjection to His will." (p. 36)

[110] Commentary on Genesis 17:20, trans. John King (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1948), Vol. 1, p. 463 (C R, XXIII, 247).

[111] 3:2:42, p. 590.

[112] 3:2:42, p. 590.

[113] 3:20:11, p. 863.

[114] 3:24:5, p. 971.

[115] 3:24:6, p. 971.

[116] 3:24:6, p. 972.

[117] 3:24:6, p. 972.

[118] 3:24:7, p. 973.

[119] Charles Hall, p. 162.

[120] Niesel, pp. 168-169.

[121] Wallace also places primary importance on the experience of faith, yet acknowledges that "there is a state of assured 'integrity of conscience' which we can be helped to attain by the signs of divine favour towards us that are manifested in our own good works. Our assurance must first be 'founded, built up, and established' on the mercy of God alone. But it can be 'further established' when we review ourselves before God and find evidence of God's dwelling and reigning within us in the works he has enabled us to do. Purity of life can be to us a true evidence and proof of election, for the righteousness which God gives us does not always remain buried in our hearts and our newness of life is testified by good works. But all such evidence is 'an inferior aid, a prop to our faith, not a foundation on which it rests.'" (p. 301)

[122] Niesel, pp. 175-176.

[123] Niesel, p. 179.

[124] 3:24:2, p. 967.

[125] 3:2:11, p. 555.

[126] 3:2:17, p. 562.

[127] 3:24:7, p. 973.

[128] Commentary on I John 4:6, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1959), p. 236 (C R, LV, 351).

[129] 3:2:1-, p. 652.

[130] 3:23:12, p. 960.

[131] In this connection, it is important to note

Calvin's doctrine of the Church. E. David Willis states: "The Word 'Church' . . . says Calvin, refers to two groups of people. One is the children of God who, by the grace of adoption, are members of Jesus Christ by the sanctification of his Spirit; within the Church so defined are not only the Saints who now dwell on earth but all the elect who ever were, from the beginning of the world. The other consists of those people in various parts of the world who profess to honor Jesus Christ, who are baptized, who participate in the Lord's Supper, who keep the preaching of the Word; in this Church there are many hypocrites. All associated with the visible church are not willing subjects of Christ; only the elect are freely obedient to him as their prince and leader in one body." (p. 141) The importance of this doctrine for the present discussion is that "those who are freely obedient are not the same in number as those who are associated with the empirical Church." (p. 152) Thus to be a participating member of the Church in Geneva did not in any way guarantee assurance of salvation.

[132] Sermon on Deuteronomy 1:34-40, quoted on Hoekema, "The Covenant of Grace in Calvin's Teaching," Calvin Theological Journal, Vol. 2, No. 2, November, 1967, p. 145.

[133] Sermon on Deuteronomy 7:7-10, quoted in Hoekema, p. 156.

[134] 2:7:12, p. 361.

[135] 3:3:16, p. 609.

[136] An additional note is in order regarding the relationship in Calvin's thought between his emphasis on futurity and the priority given to obedience as a sign of one's election. The reader may have been struck by an apparent contradiction. That is, if salvation is completed in the future, how then can one gain assurance of his salvation through his present ethical behavior? In answering this question it is important to recognize that the priority given to ethical behavior is the corollary of the emphasis on futurity. The fact that salvation is completed in the future, rather than in the present, means that the individual is forced to find means by which to alleviate the uncertainty of his future destination. This need is

heightened by Calvin's doctrine of predestination. The individual seeks in his present life to discover whether he is of the elect or the damned. He knows that there is nothing that he himself can do to earn salvation; thus good works are unrelated to the attainment of blessed immortality. But to overcome the insecurity that is concomitant to a theological system that focuses on predestination on the one hand, and the completion of salvation in the future on the other hand, the individual is forced to find ways of discovering his election to salvation. The subjective experience of faith, and the objective good works that follow faith, become signs of divine favor. Thus the importance granted to the moral law and the ethic that Calvin derives from that law, is dependent upon his idea of futurity.

[137] 3:11:13, p. 743.

[138] 3:13:4, p. 766.

[139] 3:13:5, p. 767.

[140] 3:14:18, p. 785.

[141] 3:14:18, p. 785.

[142] 3:17:14, p. 818.

[143] 3:14:21, p. 787.

[144] 3:14:21, p. 787.

[145] 3:17:3, p. 805.

[146] 3:17:3, p. 805.

[147] 3:17:8, pp. 811-812.

[148] For a discussion of the doctrine of double justification in Calvin's thought, see Willis, pp. 137-140. Willis writes that "Calvin's special doctrine of double justification affords a particularly interesting means for relating sanctification and justification. His doctrine is that one justification takes place when the sinner is accepted into the household of God and the other

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takes place graciously and repeatedly during the believer's growth in sanctification. In the first justification the works of the sinner play no part, and in the second the works of righteousness are considered to be the fruits of faith. In the second, acceptation means that God receives the adopted man as a new creature along with the gifts of the Spirit." (pp. 138-139)

[149] 3:6:3, p. 687.

[150] Commentary on Genesis 18:19, Vol. 1, p. 483 (_C_ _R_ XXIII, 259).

RICE UNIVERSITY

COVENANT THEOLOGY AND ETHICS IN THE THOUGHT OF JOHN CALVIN AND JOHN PRESTON

BY

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CHAPTER FOUR

COVENANT THEOLOGY AND ETHICS IN THE THOUGHT OF PRESTON

I. The Covenant of Grace

A. The Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace

It will be helpful to begin the following analysis of Preston's covenant theology by noting his argument that

> there is a double covenant, there is a Covenant of Works, and a Covenant of Grace: the Covenant of Works runs in these terms, 'Do this and thou shalt live, and I will be thy God.' This was the Covenant that is expressed by Moses in the Moral law . . . . The second is the Covenant of Grace, and that runs in these terms, 'Thou shalt believe, thou shalt take my Son for thy Lord, and thy Savior, and thou shalt likewise receive the gift of righteousness . . . for an absolution for thy sins, for a reconciliation with me, and thereupon thou shalt grow up in love and obedience towards me, then I will be thy God and thou shalt be my people.[1]

The covenant of works thus began as soon as God had created man. The motif of the covenant of works involves a conceptualizing of that most primary form of obligation that we noted in the last chapter. We saw that in Calvin's theology Adam was obligated to remain obedient to God by virtue of the fact that he was created by God. In Preston's theology this primary form of obligation is expressed in the doctrine of the covenant of works.[2] In elucidating this doctrine

Perry Miller states that, according to Puritan thought, God

> proposed that if Adam would perform certain things, Adam and his posterity should be rewarded with eternal life, and he laid down the specific conditions in the moral law, which He implanted in Adam's heart. Hence the terms of this first covenant . . . are what we know as the law of nature, and by failing to keep them, Adam, and we his posterity, incurred the just penalty.[3]

With man's sin, the covenant of works became obsolete, although the obligatory ethic associated with it continues its validity as the standard of conduct for the regenerate. God's attempt to create holiness in man did not end with the breaking of the covenant of works.[4] He decided to extend a new covenant, the covenant of grace, to Abraham and his posterity. In spite of its obsolescence, the covenant of works continues to function, even to the present day, in an instructional way: it teaches man that he cannot through his own efforts live the kind of obedient life whereby he would merit salvation. Thus Moses said "do this and live," as a way of clarifying for the individual the impossibility, as a result of Adam's sin, of so living. Also, as we shall see, the moral law attached to the covenant of works continues to function as a summary of that which is required on the part of the recipient of the covenant of grace. Preston, like Calvin, employs the pastoral function of the law.

Preston discusses three important differences between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.

First, the covenant of works involves a ministration of the Letter, while the covenant of grace involves the ministration of the Spirit. In the first covenant "there was no more heard nor seen, but the naked commandment, it was written in tables of stone . . . there went with it no aptness, no disposition to keep it . . . ."[5] In the covenant of grace the heart is renewed, allowing one to keep the covenant requirements. Secondly, the covenant of works "brings only a servile fear, and enmity," while the covenant of grace involves a "ministration of love, not of enmity, of freedom, not of bondage." In the first covenant one hears "no more but the law, and what it requires; he looks upon God as a hard Master, as an enemy."[6] The covenant of grace is a "ministration of righteousness," and thereby the law ceases to be a "heavy yoke" and an "unsupportable bondage." Thirdly, the first covenant brings death since "it propounds a curse to all those that do not keep it," while the second covenant brings "life and justification." The law is not in itself deadly; it only becomes the ministration of death because of "the weakness and the infirmities of the flesh."[7] Therefore, once one is within the covenant of grace, the law becomes the path to righteousness.

After discussing these differences, Preston states that

> when a man hath looked upon the Covenant of Works,

> and sees death in it, sees a strict law that he is not able to keep, then comes the Covenant of Grace, and shows to him a righteousness to satisfy that law, that himself never wrought, shows him a way of obtaining pardon and remission for the sins that he hath committed against this law.[8]

After seeing the futility of the covenant of works, the Christian casts his eyes to the covenant of grace, in which he sees the goodness and mercy of God. The believer's heart "melts toward the Lord," and his disposition and affection are accordingly changed. "Out of an ingenuity and willingness he comes and serves the Lord with alacrity and cheerfulness: the disposition is wrought in him, because now he sees another way, his apprehension is altered . . . ."[9] Now the believer does the law with willingness, for "he looks not now upon the law as an enemy, or as a hard bondage, but he looks upon all the law of God, as a wholesome and profitable rule of direction."[10]

B. The Unity of the Old and New Testaments

Preston, like Calvin, affirms the central unity of the Old and New Testaments: "The covenant of grace is twofold, it is either the Old Testament or the New; they both agree in substance, they differ only in the manner of the ministration."[11] This difference in ministration is expressed in the following points:

First, the new covenant is more extensive than the old since "it extends to the Gentiles, whereas the first was

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confined only to the Jews." Secondly, the old covenant was expressed in types and shadows, while the Christian has the substance of what the types and shadows expressed. Thirdly, the old covenant was in itself weak and unprofitable, while the new covenant is much stronger, due to the work of Christ. Fourthly, the old covenant was confirmed by the blood of sacrificed animals, while the new is confirmed by the sacrifice of Christ. The seals for the old covenant were circumcision and passover; for the new, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Fifthly, the knowledge gained through the old covenant was elementary, while in the new there is a more clear perspicuous knowledge of things, made possible by the work of the Holy Spirit. Sixthly, the Mediator of the new covenant is better than the Mediator of the old:

> Moses was the Mediator of the Old Testament, that is, it was he that declared it, it was he again that was the executioner of it; but we have a high Priest [who] is the Mediator of a better Covenant; that is, now Christ is the Mediator of the Covenant; it is he that declares the Covenant . . . and it is he that by the intervention of a certain compact, of certain articles of agreement, hath gone between them, as it were, and hath undertaken for both sides . . . God's part . . . and our part.[12]

Thus while there is no difference in substance between the old and new covenants, the latter is more extensive, clear, strong, firm, conveys more knowledge, and has a better Mediator.

In the development of these motifs, Preston

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concentrates extensively on his belief that the new covenant is an improvement over the old in that Gentiles were brought into the covenant, the promises of the new go far beyond those of the old, and more knowledge is now possible. Preston writes:

> The Old Testament was made with the Jews only . . . the New Covenant is enlarged to the Gentiles, there is now an open door for them to come in, there are now better promises, more knowledge, a larger infusion of the Spirit, both for intention, and for the extent of it, it is to many more.[13]

Thus the new covenant is strong, rich, lively, and effectual, "and the reason is, because there is more knowledge in it, we are taught to know God better, and to know the whole mystery of the Gospel better."[14]

C. The Double Nature of the Covenant of Grace: Preston's Doctrine of Election

In order to clarify Preston's doctrine of election, it would be helpful first to review Calvin's understanding of the relationship between the covenant of grace and God's general and particular election of mankind. We noted that the conditional aspect of the covenant can be seen through Calvin's doctrine of the two types of election. According to Calvin, one may hold membership in the covenant of grace, while not having membership in the circle of the particular elect. There are thus two degrees of election: during the old covenant period general election was offered to all

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Hebrews, while particular election pertained to the few individuals who lived up to their covenant commitments, through the special regenerating power of God; during the new covenant period, general election pertains to all Christians who are members of the Church, while particular election refers to those Christians to whom God gives the regenerating power. During the old covenant era circumcision functioned as admission to the covenant; during the new covenant period, Baptism functions in the same way. Just as the Jews received a lower working of the Spirit in their general election, so Christian children likewise receive a lower working of the spirit, while being baptized into future repentance and faith. The particular election of all children is known only to God, yet those whom he has elected will receive a deeper working of the Spirit. All individuals who are within the covenant of grace, are obligated to fulfill the covenantal requirements, but only he who belongs to the particular elect will actually succeed in this requirement.

In Preston's theology, the doctrine of general and particular election is expressed in terms of an "absolute and peculiar covenant" and a "conditional covenant."[15] Both types are contained within the covenant of grace. The conditional covenant is

> such as God makes with his children, when they are baptized, which is this; if you will believe

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> and repent, and walk in my ways, you shall be saved: now if they break the condition, God is freed, he is not bound any further.[16]

The absolute and peculiar covenant is

> a double covenant, to perform both parts, which is this, if you will believe, and repent, you shall be saved, and I will give you a heart, and you shall repent and believe, and be saved; I began the work, and I will finish it: here is not only a Covenant on God's part, to be our Father, but on our part also, as in the other; for God doth not only promise for his part, but makes a covenant also to enable us to perform the conditions on our part: and therefore it is called a double covenant. And it is impossible for this covenant to be broken.[17]

Those individuals who are the beneficiaries of God's general election, to use Calvin's terms, are within the conditional covenant; those who are beneficiaries of God's particular election are within the absolute and peculiar covenant.

Furthermore, Preston argues that "all the decrees . . . and all the acts of his will, that ever were in him . . . were in him from all eternity."[18] Since God is unchangeable, "there is not a vicissitude of counsels, thoughts, and desires upon the passages of things in the world, as there is in men."[19] But Preston struggles hard to relate this doctrine to the life of the Christian: "If God be unchangeable, take heed then, lest he come to this that he cast thee off, as he did Saul: for if ever he do it, he will never repent, never alter, never retract his decree."[20] Does this imply Preston's rejection of double predestination? Preston writes:

> Consider this, you that have clear commandments from God, you that have been told that you ought to be conscionable in you calling . . . if you will be still breaking the Lord's will and live idly in you calling, and rebelliously sin against God . . . take heed lest the Lord reject you; for when he hath resolved upon it, consider, that he is an unchangeable God, and that all his decrees are immutable.[21]

In this quotation Preston is talking to those who belong in the conditional covenant, and is stating that, as in the case of Saul who failed to follow God's commandment, or in the case of the Hebrews, a moment will arrive when God will cast them out of the covenant of grace.

> There is a time, I am persuaded, when the Lord pronounceth such a decree upon such a man, saying, I have rejected him: yet no man sees it, no not he himself, but he comes to Church, and hears the Word from day to day. But yet remember that God is unchangeable.[22]

Thus there is a time span in the life of the Christian who belongs to the conditional covenant, a time of preparation, in which he attempts to live up to the covenantal requirements. Upon failure, a moment arrives when God, unbeknown to the Christian, rejects the individual. "There is . . . a time of preparing and trying before this unchangeable decree come forth."[23] Until that moment arrives, the Christian has hope. "There is a time," writes Preston, "when the decree is passed, and when this is not passed, there is a door of hope opened: but when the decree is come forth, then you are past hope."[24] No one but God knows when this moment might occur; "Never an Angel, nor I, nor any creature can tell you; you see that he took Saul at the beginning of the kingdom . . . he took the Jews at the beginning of Jeremiah's preaching."[25] What use is the Christian to make of this doctrine?

> Take heed of neglecting God, or good admonition, take heed of condemning the Word from day to day, and saying, that I will repent hereafter; for the Lord perhaps will not give thee a heart to repent, he will not hear you though you cry never so much to him.[26]

On the other hand, if the Christian is a member of the particular covenant, he can be assured that God will not change his decree toward him.

> Then if thou art in Covenant with God, and have this seal in thy soul, that there is a change wrought in thee by the Covenant, and thy election is sure, be thou sure also God will never alter it, for he is unchangeable.[27]

This doctrine brings much consolation.

> Beloved, our consolation, if it be upon anything, but upon God . . . it is weak . . . but when it is grounded upon the immutability of his counsel, it is called in Hebrews 6: 18 strong consolation, so that all devils in hell, all the temptations of the world, and all the objections that our hearts can make, cannot batter it . . . so that this doctrine is a great comfort to all the saints of God. Therefore consider thou, whether thou has made the match with Jesus Christ, whether ever there was a covenant between Christ, and thy soul.[28]

He who is a member of the absolute covenant will not fall. The lusts will be mortified, sin will be subdued, through the power of Christ. God's absolute covenant will not be frustrated by the sins of the old man that still live within the saint. As with Calvin, the salvation of the elect is sure. But how can one be sure of his election? An attempt will be made to give Preston's answer to this question later in the chapter, but for now we must note this response to "whether thou hast made the match with Jesus Christ":

> But how shall I know it, you will say? Did you ever come to this, as to say, I am content to be divorced from, and to part with all things, with every lust, and to be content to follow him, through all his ways, and to bear every cross? Yet this is not enough; did there follow here upon, a general change within thy heart, and a new heart, and a new spirit given thee? Otherwise it is but lip-labour, a thought only that passeth through the mind, and therefore was never any such actual agreement between Christ and thee.[29]

Proof can only be found in the new heart, the new spirit, that does the will of God.

Yet, argues Preston, he who has not had this new heart must not let the doctrine of the unchangeableness of God's decrees keep him from seeking to change his life. Preston is forced to answer the question: "for what end is it then to pray to endeavor a change of life, or to repent, for if there be such an unresistible decree passed against me, what hope is there?"[30] There is an unchangeable decree that every man will die; yet this does not keep one from sustaining his life through nourishment. Likewise there is a decree "concerning the success of every business under the sun," but this does not keep the business man from exercising all his enterprising powers.

In like manner there is an unchangeable decree

> concerning the salvation of men, concerning giving grace, or denying grace to them; and you can no more take an argument from hence, to give over endeavors, than you can in the former.[31]

Even though a decree is made to reject some individuals, and that decree cannot be altered,

> yet this decree is kept secret, and no man knows it: therefore there is a door of hope opened to all, to stir them up to endeavor. Indeed if the decree were made known, and revealed to us, then it were in vain, then there were no place for endeavors but seeing it is not so, therefore there is place for hope, and for endeavors which arise from hope.[32]

Therefore, states Preston, "if thou dost pray, thou shalt change God and his carriage toward thee, though he be unchangeable." This is possible because if one can still pray, repent, and seek God, "it is a great sign that he hath not given thee over, and that no such unchangeable decree is passed against thee: therefore it is no doctrine of discouragement."[33] Thus the decree of reprobation is made during the life-time of the individual; should the individual still be able to seek God, the decree most likely has not yet been made. The doctrine of the unchangeableness of God's decrees will strike terror in the hearts of only those who can no longer pray and seek God.

But Preston goes even further in softening the implications of the doctrine of election.

> Though God's decree be unchangeable, yet if thou canst find a change in thy self, it shall go well with thee: as if a Father should take up an

> unchangeable resolution to disinherit a stubborn and ungracious child, because he is so; if the child should change and alter his course, and grow sober, the Father may now receive him to mercy, and yet no change in his resolution, but the change is only in his son.[34]

Therefore, if God has threatened to reject the individual, because he is stubborn and rebellious,

> if now thou shalt find a change in thy self, that thy stubborn heart is broken . . . fearing to offend him, or to commit any sin . . . I say, not withstanding that unchangeableness of his, he cannot but receive thee to mercy.[35]

Thus, Preston's understanding of election becomes clear. Some individuals have been elected to salvation; these individuals belong to the absolute covenant. Other individuals, who belong to the conditional covenant, are allowed a time of "preparing and trying." Should these individuals fail to live up to their covenantal responsibilities, should they never experience the regenerating power of God, a moment comes when God sends forth, known only to him, a decree that they are outside the covenant. Yet, should he pray, should he seek God, should he become obedient, God will respond.

> Beloved, there is a double time . . . a time of the coming forth of this decree, and a time of preparing and trying while the door stands open: therefore take heed that that acceptable time do not pass away, lest thou be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.[36]

But what about those who belong to the absolute and peculiar covenant? The essence of that covenant is that God has promised to instill faith and regeneration. Yet the individual must be obedient. Is it not then possible that under certain conditions they too will receive the punishment of God? The answer, according to Preston, is yes. Even though one be regenerated, and one of God's elect, "there be two cases wherein the Lord will not spare, but bring judgment upon his own children."[37] These two cases are open scandal, and unrepented sin. These sins will not result in being thrown out of the covenant of grace, but they will result in the temporal punishment of God. Every man is held responsible, whether belonging to the absolute or conditional covenant of grace.

As can be seen from the above analysis, Preston was struggling to find a way in which he could continue to affirm the doctrine of election, while prodding his listeners to live a life of obedience. Irvonwry Morgan, in his biography of Preston, points out that during the 1620's Preston emerged as the leader of the predestinarian Puritans against the Arminian party within the Anglican Church.[38] While the Arminians went to the Church Fathers to support their views, Preston and his colleagues turned to Calvin. Preston's position can be seen in the stance that he took at the York House Conference in February, 1626, which involved the attempt to secure unity between the ecclesiastical authorities on the basic issue of predestination versus free will. Preston, along with other Puritans, seemingly supported the decisions reached at the Synod of Dort. Thus, for example,

> the question under discussion was whether an elect man who fell into sin, could lose the grace of election, and incur the penalty of eternal damnation. Preston argued that he could not, for if he sinned he incurred the guilt of some temporal punishment only.[39]

But if Preston was forced to hold to the doctrine of election because of the Arminian threat, he was likewise forced to demonstrate that this doctrine was not a doctrine of "discouragement," that every man who was within the covenant of grace, was obligated to seek God, to repent, to live a life of obedience. Preston is able to prod his listeners in this direction because, first of all, no one can be absolutely certain of the eternal decrees of God. God must keep these decrees secret, argues Preston, otherwise "there would be no place for endeavors." Furthermore, Preston maintains that the decree of reprobation is carried out only after the individual fails to prepare for God's mercy. This doctrine possesses a threat: a time will come when the decree is made; therefore, one had better respond today. Yet no man can know the moment of this decree. As long as one can still prepare, through prayer and holy living, the decree has not been made. But even then, the small group who can no longer prepare, should not be discouraged. For a change in heart will make God respond. In this case, the decree has not been changed, only the person.

Thus, Preston provides a rationale for obedient living for every individual within the covenant of grace. Whether a member of the absolute covenant or the conditional covenant, obedience is required. Those who are members of the absolute covenant will be obedient, because God has given them the spirit of regeneration. Those who are members of the conditional covenant are likewise obligated, just as the Hebrews were upon entrance into the covenant of grace through the rite of circumcision. Hopefully, those individuals, after a period of preparation, after living up to his covenantal commitments, will receive the regenerating power of Christ. Even the person who has failed in his commitments must not be discouraged. Thus in the theory of the covenant of grace, Preston has attempted to unite a doctrine of election with the necessity for obedience, without becoming Arminian.

In regard to assurance of salvation, certainty can only come if the believer is convinced that he is within the absolute covenant of grace, which in turn depends on whether one has had the experience of faith, followed by a regenerative life. But, as will be noted shortly, there can occur "counterfeit faith." In the last analysis proof of election must be gleamed from the regenerative life, from the kind of moral life that is expected of the saint. Here the individual can gain a sense of confidence, a boldness, an awareness that he has been predestined for salvation.

In the discussion to follow, it should be remembered that the conditions of the covenant, faith and repentance, apply to all members of the covenant. Those who are elected to salvation will have a genuine experience of faith, and their regeneration will be successful through the gracious activity of God.

D. Mutuality and Conditionality of the Covenant

In the preceding chapters, an attempt was made to demonstrate the mutuality and conditionality involved in Calvin's conception of the covenant. Unlike Calvin research, twentieth-century Puritan scholarship has emphasized the conditional understanding behind Puritan covenant theology. Thus, Perry Miller writes that in the use of the word "covenant," Puritan theologians "understood just such a contract as was used among men of business, a bond or a mortgage, an agreement between two parties, signed and sworn to, and binding upon both."[40] In a covenantal relationship one is "infinitely more liable than in a promise, more obligated than by a law, more involved than in a testament, more answerable than for his oath."[41] The Puritan theologians, argues Miller, applied this concept to the relationship between God and man, and found in the idea "a key to the history of the universe, the innermost meaning of divine revelation, the foundation of law in the apparent lawlessness of nature."[42] Miller points out that according to Puritan theory, the God who was under no obligation freely took it upon himself to agree to a set of terms, to conditions which he must uphold. The covenant is "an agreement of unequals upon just and equal terms, 'which God promises true happiness to man, and man engages himself by promise for performance of what God requires.'"[43]

According to Preston, the Abrahamic covenant inaugurated the reign of the covenant of grace. In interpreting the seventeenth chapter of Genesis, Preston writes:

> 'I will make my covenant between me and thee'; that is, I will not only tell thee what I am able to do, I will not only express to thee in general, that I will deal well with thee, that I have a willingness and ability to recompense thee, if you walk before me, and serve me, and be perfect; but I am willing to enter into Covenant with thee, that is, I will bind myself, I will engage myself, I will enter into bond, as it were, I will not be at liberty any more, but I am willing even to make a Covenant, a compact and agreement with thee . . . . I will not make a temporary Covenant, but an everlasting Covenant, there shall be a mutual engagement between us, and it shall continue forever, both to thyself and to thy posterity.[44]

This passage supports Miller's claim that "the fundamental point, insisted upon ad nauseam, was the voluntaristic basis of the undertaking."[45] The granting of the covenant demonstrates the goodness of God:

> It is a thing that is not sufficiently considered of us, how great a mercy it is, that the glorious God of heaven and earth should be willing to enter in the Covenant, that he should be willing to indent with us, as it were, that he should be willing to make himself a debtor to us.[46]

Even though he is God and man is "dust and ashes," the covenant agreement implies a "kind of equality between us." This reality should lead the believer to praise the mercy of God, for

> what am I . . . that I should be raised hither to, that I should enter into Covenant with the great God, that he should come to a compact and agreement with me, that he should tie himself, and bind himself to become a debtor to me.[47]

In expressing the covenantal relationship between God and man, Preston uses military and political metaphors, which describe how a weak country and a strong country will develop a mutual alliance, whereby both countries will receive benefits. In spite of the small country's insignificance, the strong country has sworn to protect and honor the weak country, as long as the latter remains loyal to the former. In the same manner, God has agreed to protect and nourish the covenant member.[48]

According to Preston's interpretation of the seventeenth chapter of Genesis, God's promise in the covenant is:

> This is the Covenant that I will make on my part, I will be thy God; and I will tell you what a God I will be unto you, I will be a God All-sufficient.

The covenant that is required on the part of the believer is

> that you be perfect with me, that you be upright, that you be without hypocrisy . . . so that though a man be subject to infirmities, yet, if he will have a single heart, an upright heart, the Lord accepts it.[49]

Preston also states:

> God hath said, he will be All-sufficient, but

> he requires this again, on our part, that we be altogether his: 'My beloved is mine, and I am his,' and 'I will walk perfectly with them that walk perfectly with me': there are the terms of the Covenant, the Lord will have it thus far upon even terms, there shall be an integrity on both sides, and therefore if a man be holy but by halves, that makes not the match, it makes not the agreement between the Lord and us: for all and half is not a match, but all and all is that which makes the match, the agreement and suitableness between God and us.[50]

Preston asserts that the doctrine of the covenant is the most important article of faith, as seen in the fact that "all that we teach you, from day to day, are but conclusions drawn from this covenant."[51] Therefore, the individual must know this doctrine, "for it is the ground of all you hope for, it is that that every man is built upon, you have no other ground but this, God hath made a Covenant with you, and you are in Covenant with him . . . ."[52]

In the Abrahamic covenant, God promised that through his posterity a Messiah would come, by whom all the nations would be blessed. Preston writes:

> This is the great Covenant that the Lord made with Abraham: So you see how the promise is made to the seed: For the promise was made thus to the seed, God hath promised that he would be a King, a Priest, a Prophet . . . .[53]

Preston sees the content of God's covenantal promise as the promise to forgive sins, to sanctify and heal the believers' infirmities, and to provide the believer with all things that are necessary.

In regard to the first covenantal promise, Preston writes that the factor that keeps men from coming to God is

> a fear that he is not ready to forgive, that he is not All-sufficient, that he hath not power enough of mercy to forgive our sins . . . now the more this fear is taken away, the nearer we come, the nearer we draw in assurance of faith to him.[54]

The covenantal promise of the forgiveness of sins is fulfilled in the priestly work of Christ. While the old covenant priests functioned as a shadow of Christ as priest, the incarnate Christ has made the perfect sacrifice whereby the forgiveness of sins is made possible.[55] Belief in the fulfillment of this promise

> increaseth our love, for, when there is no scruple in our hearts of God's love toward us, it makes our love more perfect towards him. It increaseth our joy also; because when we have a full assurance of the forgiveness of our sins, that fills the heart with joy and peace in the Holy Ghost.[56]

The second covenantal promise, that of sanctification, is fulfilled in Christ as King. One problem the believer faces is, "how shall the strength of my lusts, this crooked and perverse heart of mine, and the straight ways of God stand together."[57] But God, through Christ as King, promises to change the heart, and

> if the Lord change this heart of mine, and take away these lusts, if the Lord put another impression upon me that is natural to me, which is like that instinct he putteth into the creature, then it is easier for me to do it.[58]

As King, Christ guides and rules the heart of the covenant member. "It is part of his kingdom now to set up his own government in thy heart, to put his law in the mind, and to write it in the inward parts, that thou may be indeed subject to the kingdom of Christ in a willing manner."[59] The believer obtains a new affection, so that there "shall be a grace within, a habit of love within, answerable to the Commandment without . . ." But Christ as King also grants a sense of peace for "his kingdom is spiritual; therefore the main work of it is to give us inward peace and joy."[60]

Finally, God's covenantal promises include the commitment to provide the believer with all things that are necessary. In both his kingly and prophetic offices, Christ fulfills this promise. For instance, as King, Christ not only can provide inward peace, but also outward peace, for

> it is likewise a part of his Covenant, when a man wants any outward comfort, any outward help, and blessings, or deliverance, he may go to Christ . . . and beseech him to grant it unto him: for it is part of the Covenant.[61]

Likewise, as Prophet, Christ teaches the covenantal member all that he needs to know about sin, God, afflictions, good and evil.

Therefore, by virtue of the work of Christ, which is the fulfillment of God's covenantal promise to be All-sufficient to the believer, the Christian participates in the priestly, kingly, and prophetic activities of Christ through the "powering out of the Spirit upon us." Thus if God be All-sufficient, Preston writes, "let us be exhorted to make a Covenant with him . . . this is the Covenant God will make with you; if you will enter into Covenant with him, he will be All-sufficient to you."[62]

In order to understand what is required on man's part, it is helpful to turn to Preston's discussion of Abraham's response to God's covenant of grace. The condition that God required of Abraham was "thou shalt believe this, thou shalt believe that such a Messiah shall be sent into the world: art thou able to believe this, Abraham? He answers, yes."[63] When Abraham, through faith, accepted the covenantal promise, God's response was:

> This faith of thine I take for the condition of the Covenant on thy part, I will for this reckon thee righteous, I will account thee a man fit to be entered into Covenant with.[64]

What was true in regard to Abraham, is also true for man at the present time: "If a man will but believe God now, it makes him partaker of the Covenant, this puts him within the Covenant."[65]

Preston is careful in answering the question why faith is the necessary requirement for entering into the covenant. First, faith results in "works, sanctification, and holiness of life."[66] It is impossible for an individual to believe in the covenant promise, while walking in the lusts of his own ignorance, and still be a partaker of the covenant. Holiness follows the faith experience that is genuine: "Let any man believe as Abraham did, and of necessity it will produce good works."[67] Abraham's faith was a "true" faith, not a "dead" or "counterfeit" faith. For this reason Abraham became a dutiful and obedient servant. Secondly, faith is necessary for entrance into the covenant

> because it could not be done by obedience to the law, it was impossible to have made the sons of men partakers of the Covenant that way. For if it could have been done by the law, and by the Commandment, it should have been; but the Lord tried that in Adam, he gave Adam a Commandment, and ability to keep it, yet Adam did not keep it.[68]

Thirdly, entrance must be by faith "because nothing else can answer the Covenant, but faith."[69] This is so because the covenant is not a commandment, but a promise. Therefore,

> it is faith that answers the promise . . . the promise is to be believed; if the Covenant had stood in precepts, and commandments, and rules of the law, then it must have been answered by works, and obedience, and therefore it could not be by obedience.[70]

Fourthly, "it is by faith, because the Lord would have it by free grace, and not of debt."[71] If the covenant arrangement were entirely legal, then the individual would be more of a "servant" of God, than a "child" of God. "If the Lord had given a law and rules to men, and promised them life upon it, when they had performed the work [which is impossible], they would challenge it of debt."[72] This would contradict the notion that the gift of life is an inheritance. Preston concludes this discussion of the necessity of faith by remarking: "Surely, look how Abraham was made partaker of the Covenant, so everyone of us must be; Abraham was made partaker

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of it by faith, so shall everyman be made partaker of it by faith, and no otherwise."[73]

While it is possible to postpone a discussion of the practical content of Preston's covenantal ethic, it would be advantageous at this point to explore more fully man's responsibility in the covenantal relationship. According to Genesis 17:1, the "condition" associated with the covenant is that man must "walk before me and be . . . perfect." Preston is concerned with that which "God requires on our part, without which we have no interest in his Covenant, namely, that we be sincere and perfect."[74] It is necessary that the believer continually remember this condition,

> for so have you promised, there is a stipulation, an engagement, remember that you keep covenant, and condition with him (for it is reciprocal): for all covenants must be mutual, they must be between two parties, and remember, that thou put the seal to it, that thou renew with God the Covenant, that thou hast made to walk before him perfectly.[75]

The gospel requires that the believer have respect for all the commandments, that he should seek to keep the whole law "in an evangelical manner." Thus the covenant requires

> that we should keep the whole law, in that sense, so as to square our lives to it; to keep it in all truth, and sincerity, though we cannot reach the highest top, and degree of it; now if the heart were not perfectly holy, that is, throughout, there could be no proportion between the Commandments and the facility and ability upon which the Commandments lies for it is certain, except the heart were perfectly holy, it could not keep the whole law . . . . And therefore there must be integrity . . . in the

> heart, that we may be able to keep them, at least in an evangelical sincere manner, though we cannot keep the whole law of God.[76]

While faith is the necessary requirement for entrance into the covenant, a life of obedience is included in the covenant stipulations. Obedience without faith is impossible, while faith that does not result in obedience is not true faith. The full covenantal condition involves not only faith, but the requirement that "you must serve him, and love him, and obey him, and turn from all your evil ways."[77] This is the "covenant and agreement" made between God and man.

> If any sin have dominion over thee, if there be one living lust in thee that is not mortified, that is not healed, I assure thee thou never had any part in Christ,

and thereby one can conclude that he is not in the covenant.[78]

The Old Testament contains many illustrations of individuals who failed to live up to their covenant stipulations. For instance, argues Preston, the Lord was with Sampson as long as Sampson followed the command that he should "nourish" his hair. When he disobeyed the command, the Spirit of God was withdrawn from him. Preston writes:

> The Lord hath appointed us to keep his ordinances, and so long he will be with us, to be All-sufficient to us, to give us strength to enable us to do the duties that he commands us, and to abstain from the evils he would not have us do: but we must keep his ordinances, and go by his Rules, and if we fail in either of them . . . the Lord is discharged of his promise . . . the Lord now withdraws his power from us . . . . if you will needs go into such a company, if you will neglect to observe the rules that he hath appointed, if you will

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> neglect prayer, and hearing and sanctifying the Sabbath. In all these cases the Lord withdraws his All-sufficiency. And therefore lay the fault where it is; that is, upon ourselves. Do not say . . . it is because the Lord is not All-sufficient, but rather think that he can give power to God through the work he hath appointed me to do, but it is because I have not kept his rules, I have neglected the means, I have ventured upon such occasions.[79]

In this quotation we see the extent to which Preston goes in demonstrating the conditionality of the covenant. Not only is faith necessary, but also the keeping of rules, the commandments of God. God's All-sufficiency applies only where obedience exists. This raises once again the problem of assurance in the covenant theology of the Reformed tradition. In reference to Calvin, it was asked whether assurance of salvation comes through the experience of faith and/or through a life-time of doing good works. The same question can be asked of Preston. While this question will be dealt with more fully later in the chapter, it is possible at this point to ascertain the position in Preston's thought that assurance comes through fulfilling the requirements of the covenant agreement, and these requirements clearly specify both faith and obedience. Without faith, obedience cannot be achieved; without obedience, true faith must be lacking. Assurance can only come where faith is joined with "perfect" obedience. here one finds the foundation of Preston's ethic. It is a covenantal ethic, in that the ethic consists in those conditions that are attached to the covenant. By necessity, it is an obligatory ethic, in that without its fulfillment, God's covenantal promises cannot be experienced.

II. Entering Into the Covenant

A. The Theological Use of the Law

Like Luther and Calvin, Preston employs the theological use of the law. "Men must first be convinced of their impiety and unrighteousness, before they can be fit to receive the Gospel."[80] It is the function of the law to bring this self-understanding.

> As the Physicians have their method in curing, first to purge and cleanse the body, and then to give cordials, so it is a rule in Divinity, you must be humbled before you can be justified, or humiliation goes before justification.[81]

No man can come to Christ until the law serves as a schoolmaster. The law drives the individual to Christ

> by showing a man his vileness, and if this will not do it, then it shows him the curse; when a man sees the misery that the law brings upon him, and pronounces against him, that he is condemned, that persuades him: Therefore the law drives a man, and the sense of his misery, showing him that he is out of Christ.[82]

Then, when the individual understands his miserable situation, "that he cannot live without Christ, this will be one thing that boweth and inclineth the will to come in and take Christ."[83] The individual is thus driven from the covenant of works to the covenant of grace. In the covenant of works, the law was given as the requirement on the part of man. But since "no aptness, no disposition" was given to man that would allow him to live up to the condition, the law now functions as a way of driving man to the covenant of grace, where he benefits from the work of Christ, thus gaining justification and the ability to now keep the law.

> When the Covenant of Works is delivered to you, that is, when you hear the law, the Commands, the duty you cannot perform, there is no more delivered to you but the bare letter, that is, you know the duty, and no more. And what does this duty do? What do these commandments and precepts do, when they are applied to the heart of a man . . . they kill. Now that which kills, fights before it kills, and which fights must needs be an enemy. So then the Commandment is an enemy . . . the naked Commandment and the heart are at enmity.[84]

One must then go to the covenant of grace, and "when a man looks on the Covenant of Grace he looks not on it as an enemy, as he did before upon the Commandment, but he sees in it much love."[85] He now finds God to be kind and merciful, willing to forgive sins, and "willing to accept the sincerity of his obedience."[86] Now the individual begins to change his opinion, "both of God and of all his laws," so that now he is able to "observe the Commandments that God hath given him."[87]

Once the individual looks upon the law as a schoolmaster, the psychological condition that emerges is that of "humiliation." Humiliation consists in two things: a recognition of one's sins, so that the individual realizes that "there is no worth, no excellency, no worthiness" in himself, and secondly, a recognition of "wrath due for sin."[88] This double recognition, which is the heart of humiliation, forces the individual to perceive the justice of God; that is, to "confess himself to be a sinner, to be ashamed of his sins, to acknowledge himself worthy to be destroyed" on account of the justice of God.[89] Therefore, "labor to see yourself humbled, if ever you look to be saved and justified."[90]

Norman Pettit contends that Preston's doctrine of humiliation is an expression of the Puritan concern with preparation for salvation, which leads in New England to a full blown doctrine of preparation, in which the clergy exhort the people to prepare for conversion.[91] Pettit contends that this concern, as evidenced in Preston, differs from Reformed orthodoxy, in which the doctrine of predestination resulted in focusing on sudden conversion, in which the soul is overwhelmed by the grace of God, along the lines of the Pauline model. Pettit writes that

> the Puritan preachers of the Elizabethan church were able to find a closer bond between man and God. Grace, as they conceived it, gently linked man to God in such a way that if man never knew the precise moment it had occurred he would certainly know the process through which it had been attained.[92]

So instead of moving quickly from law to grace, as in the theology of Tyndale, Zwingli, or Martyr, the Puritans focused

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on a period of time between the conscience being troubled through the pedagogical function of the law to the moment when forgiveness of sins occurred.

> By preparation they meant a period of prolonged introspection, meditation and self-analysis in the light of God's revealed Word . . . . From conviction of conscience, the soul moved through a series of interior stages, always centered on self-examination, which in turn were intended to arouse a longing desire for grace.[93]

In the preparatory process, the soul first had to experience contrition and humiliation.

Pettit understands that the teachings of Calvin did not contradict the early Puritan expression of preparation. Calvin differed from Tyndale, Zwingli, and Martyr in that his "conception of conversion involves a wider range of experience than sudden transformation. While he held that man is totally depraved, and can do nothing of his own to prepare for grace, he did not deny preparation as such . . . he did not insist that grace comes suddenly. Indeed the very perversity of the heart suggested to him that it must be constrained by God in advance."[94] Thus, Pettit disagrees with Perry Miller's assertion that the idea of preparation involves a total departure from Calvin.[95] Later New England theology, in its developed doctrine of preparation, no doubt moves closer to Arminianism, but in Preston one finds concern for the process of conversion that is not unsimilar to Calvin's analysis.[96] Thus, while there is a tendency in Preston to focus more than Calvin did on the pre-conversion experience, 2

Miller has exaggerated the differences.

However, it can be seen that the doctrine of preparation develops in Preston's theology from the distinction between the absolute and peculiar covenant and the conditional covenant. As noted earlier, there is a period of time granted to the individual in which he is to prepare for the experience of grace. Preston seeks to exhort his listeners to pray and to be obedient. Should they fail in this task, God is likely to send forth his decree of reprobation. While Preston fought hard to uphold the doctrine of election as a way of countering Arminianism, his concern with instilling obedience, of warding off "discouragement," results in the doctrine of preparation. Without the Word, without the activity of God, humiliation would be impossible. Nevertheless, in the notion of preparation, a kind of compromise is taking place between a strict interpretation of election and the necessity to encourage obedience. Pettit is correct in finding some similarity to this in Calvin. Yet the type of compromise that takes place in Preston, certainly allows for an incorporation of some of the attitudes of the Arminians, without becoming an exponent of free will.

To his discussion of humiliation, Preston adds a further note. One must ascertain whether his humiliation be really true and sincere, for "there is much counterfeit

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humiliation."[97] The person who has had only counterfeit humiliation has no doubt been troubled by sin, in that "God may send many messengers of wrath to knock at the door of their hearts, which perhaps disquiets and troubles them a little," but they "return to their rest again," never sufficiently experiencing the genuine kind of humiliation that drives one completely to Christ. Therefore one must ask the question:

> Is it such a [genuine] humiliation as hath brought thee to Christ? To count him the [highest] good, to over-go any thing rather than him, to stand out against all persecutions, rather than to forsake him; canst thou forsake all Syrens, all lusts and pleasures which allure thee? Art thou thus brought home to Christ, to esteem him above all things . . . . Art thou thus brought home with humiliation, that thou wilt not let Christ go for anything, neither losses nor pleasure, nor temptations on the right and left hand: then thou art come home indeed; otherwise thou hast not taken him truly, neither art humble . . . .[98]

Here one sees Preston's belief that the individual may believe that he is in the absolute and peculiar covenant of grace, but unless his life shows the kind of dedication and obedience that Christ requires, it becomes evident that he never experienced the genuine kind of humiliation that would drive him to Christ in a manner befitting a new covenant believer.

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B. Faith: The Condition for Entrance into the Covenant

There have been only two possible ways by which salvation could be obtained: "either by something we do ourselves, some actions that we ourselves have wrought, or else it must be merely by faith."[99] The history of man demonstrates that salvation through works is impossible. Furthermore, "if it had been attainable by any work of our own, Christ died without a cause."[100] But for this very reason "Christ came into the World, and died, that he might work righteousness, and make satisfaction to God: so that you have nothing to do for the first attaining of it, but to receive it by faith."[101] Preston values the doctrine of justification by faith alone:

> If there had been any action of ours required, but merely the receiving of it by faith, it had not been merely of grace, for faith empties a man, it takes a man quite off his own bottom; faith commeth as an empty hand, and receiveth all from God, and gives all to God.[102]

There are several other reasons that Preston gives for why justification occurs by faith alone. First, salvation is sure only if it rests on the grace of God. Adam was given grace and ability, yet he failed to keep the law.

> But now, when the righteousness that saveth is wrought already by God, and offered to us by him, and offered freely, and that the ground of this offer is the sure Word of God . . . now we may build infallibly upon it: for unless faith have footing on the Word, we cannot say it is sure . . . .[103]

Secondly, justification occurs by faith

> that it might be to all the seed, not only to those that are of the law, but also to them which were strangers to the law. If it had been by the law, then salvation had been shut up within the compass of the Jews; for the Gentiles were strangers to the law of God.[104]

Thirdly, justification occurs through faith so that man might not boast in himself. If man were able to keep the conditions of the covenant, after justification, through his own strength, which he cannot, it would be cause for much self-righteousness, thus restricting the glory of God. For this reason the work of Christ also consists in sanctification. Therefore, in regard to the holy individual, after justification has occurred, "it is Christ that sanctifieth him, and that carries him through his life in a holy and righteous conversation, and all this is done that 'no self should rejoice in itself.'"[105]

In defining faith, Preston makes a distinction between "general faith" and "justifying faith." General faith is "nothing else but a firm assent given to the things contained in the Holy Scriptures, for the authority of God that spake them."[106] Justifying faith can be defined as "a grace or a habit infused into the soul by the Holy Ghost, whereby we are enabled to believe, not only that the Messiah is offered to us, but also to take and receive him as a Lord and Savior."[107] Thus the difference between the two kinds of faith can be summarized as follows: (1) while the object of general faith is "the whole book of God," in which the individual believes all that God has revealed, the object of justifying faith is Christ, with his benefits and privileges. The two different kinds of faith differ "not in the habit, but in the object"; (2) general faith simply believes the truth that is revealed. But wicked men, as well as the devil, may have this type of faith. Justifying faith, on the other hand, "goeth further, it takes Christ, and receives him, so that there is an act of the will added to that of faith."[109] The crucial difference between general faith and justifying faith centers not in comprehension, but in the will. There must be consent as well as assent. The understanding assents to the truth, but the will is necessary to fully embrace the truth:

> Though the understanding rightly apprehend all that is delivered in the Word, yet except the will be bowed, except we incline, and be willing to embrace these offers, and willingly take Christ upon these conditions, the thing is not; for I say, justifying faith is as well in the will as in the understanding.[110]

The will can be moved only by the activity of God: "it is God that draweth the will, it is he that puts a strong instinct into the heart of man, it is he that must work in the heart . . ."[111]

In his analysis of faith, Preston observes that there is significant variation in the depth of faith: "Faith admits degrees, and every Christian ought to grow from one degree to another."[112] In regard to comprehension, there is variation in the extent to which one fully comprehends the truth that Christ is given to the believer. Peter believed in Christ, yet there was an element of doubt in his comprehension. The least degree of faith is that which allows the believer to first receive Christ. The highest degree of comprehension results in a full persuasion of divine truth. In regard to consistency of faith, especially in moments of trial, there is variation. For instance, Martha and Mary believed Christ, but when Lazarus died, they were faced with a difficult situation, and their faith was not as strong as it should have been. Abraham is the model of "a great degree of faith," willing to sacrifice his son at the command of God.[113] There is also variation of faith in relation to the history of salvation. The righteousness of Christ was still obscure during the time of the law and prophets, and therefore there was little faith among the Hebrews to believe, although it was sufficient to save them. The depth of faith has become more significant since the time that Christ became incarnate. Finally, there is variation in the depth of faith in regard to assurance: "That faith that gives assurance, persuaded that we have taken Christ, and that our sins are forgiven, this admits of degrees."[14] Here Preston correlates sanctification with faith: "As the evidences of sanctification are more, so is the assurance."[115] As sanctification increases, so does faith, and thereby "we grow from

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assurance to assurance."[116]

Preston returns frequently to the theme of counterfeit versus genuine faith. This is especially true in A Treatise of Effectual Faith. Preston begins this book by remarking that "when we hear so much of faith, and that there is nothing at all required of us, but a mere taking, lest any man should be deceived, and run away with a false opinion, that if he have but a naked apprehension, and no more, he shall do well enough," it is necessary to understand the nature of true faith. Preston wishes to argue "that there is a faith which is not effectual; there is a faith in the world, that goes for true faith, which, if it be examined, is not a faith that saves."[117]

Preston gives five reasons for ineffectual faith. First, "ineffectualness of faith ariseth upon our taking of Christ upon misinformation, when we know not who it is that we take, when we understand not aright what we do."[118] Many individuals rush to receive Christ, before they enter into a serious consideration of their act. These people "know not what the wars are, they know not what hardness they must endure, and therefore when they come to feel it, when come to see what pains they must take, and what they must endure, they shrink."[119] The lusts and desires of these individuals are never mortified, and thus they fail in the Christian life. Secondly, ineffectualness of faith arises

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> when men take Christ out of fear, when they are in some present distress, and would have ease, and upon this take Christ, not because of any true love to him, but because they would be delivered out of that present exigent which they are in.[120]

Once the troubles cease, once their consciences become quiet, "then there is an end of their religion, and of their faith . . . ."[121] Thirdly, ineffectual faith arises "when men take Christ not out of love to his person, but out of love to those commodities and advantages they shall have by him."[122] This type of faith loses its effectiveness "when other commodities are presented, that are present and sensible."[123] These individuals seek mercy, not grace. "As for grace, for repairing the image of God in their hearts, to be enabled to obey Christ in all things, this is a thing they desire not."[124] Fourthly,

> faith proves ineffectual for want of preparation, and humiliation that should go before it; because the heart is not circumcized, the heart is not broken yet, it is not emptied of those things that it must be emptied of before a man can take Christ.[125]

The law must serve first as a schoolmaster, before it can later serve as a guide for the Christian life. Fifthly, "the faith of men proves ineffectual, because it is not well grounded, they take to themselves a persuasion of the remission of their sins, upon an uncertain ground . . . ."[126] These individuals may think their sins have been forgiven, but that is a false persuasion, a "fancy" only; this kind of faith will soon falter.

Having discussed ineffectual faith, Preston moves into a discussion of genuine faith. Faith is said to be effectual when, first of all, it sincerely and genuinely takes Christ. This occurs when a man is truly persuaded of the truth of scripture, and the promises contained therein, and appropriates these promises. This does not mean that all doubting ceases, "for you must know that there is a doubting mingled with the best of faith."[127] The doubting of the person with effectual faith never overwhelms the individual. The doubting of the person with counterfeit faith becomes so severe that he cannot withstand the "temptation" and "allurement" of the world. Faith is also said to be effectual when it "lieth not idle and still, but is doing something."[128] Ineffectual faith lies dormant, unable to produce fruits. Faith is effectual "when it goes through with the work that it hath in hand."[129] Faith must sanctify, thereby bringing "a man to the end of salvation, when it carries a man through all impediments, when it leaps over all difficulties . . . such a faith leaves not the work half done."[130] Thus, Preston finds four qualities in effectual faith: (1) true humiliation has preceded the faith; (2) true and genuine comprehension has occurred; (3) will has been joined to the comprehension; (4) good works follow faith, so that "faith shoots itself into life and practice."[131]

Thus the condition for entrance into the covenant of grace is the exercise of faith, which involves both comprehension and will. It should be mentioned that one finds in Preston's sermons a frequent evangelical call to faith.

> Take heed of refusing the acceptable time, take heed of not coming in when the door of Grace is open; take heed of doing as the foolish Virgins did, they would come, and came, but they tarried till the door was shut upon them: Beloved there is a certain acceptable time, when God offers Grace, and after that he offers it no more.[132]

Delay in all things is dangerous, "but procrastination in taking the offer of grace is the most dangerous thing in the world."[133] God may very easily understand the deferral as denial. Preston warns that

> in these days of Grace, the Lord is much more quick . . . in rejecting men, and casting them off, the time is shorter, he will not wait so long as he was wont to do in those [Old Testament] times.[134]

Furthermore, since the mercy of God is much greater in his later revelation, "the wrath and danger is greater in refusing."[135] Therefore, the idea of losing the opportunity "should move us to come in, and to take heed of refusing the offer at any time."[136] Yet one must be ever so careful to be sure that his faith is firm and effectual, for a counterfeit faith will not stand the test of time, and assurance of salvation will wither away.

III. Sanctification and the Life of Obedience: Preston's Covenantal Ethic

A. The Nature of Sanctification

As a consequence of effectual faith, and ensuing justification, the Christian moves towards a sanctified life. Justification gives rise to sanctification as a result of two factors.

First,

> as soon as any man hath taken Christ, and received that righteousness of his by faith, there is an union between Christ and him, upon this union the Spirit of Christ is shed into him . . . you have the same Spirit sent into your hearts that dwells in Christ.[137]

While the Spirit was already active in the instilling of faith, it now takes on a more forceful role, "for there is a certain work of the Spirit that begetteth faith, and the same work of the Spirit, in its time, begetteth the degrees of sanctification."[138] It is impossible for man "to be turned in to the glorious image of God" without the work of the Spirit. "A man may as well say, I will make a clod of earth a shining star, as to say he can make the carnal and dead heart of man to be like the image of God."[139] Therefore it must be the work of the Spirit, the same Spirit that was active in prompting faith. Thus when the individual is once ingrafted into Christ, the sanctifying Spirit of God has already begun its work.

Secondly, sanctification

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> ariseth from some actions wrought in the mind, whereby a man comes to this conclusion; if Christ have accepted me for his, if he be mine, and will justify me, and free me from my sins, then I will serve him in all things.[140]

The transformation of the mind occurs in several ways: (a) The mind is changed in that the individual apprehends the work of Christ on his behalf, and as a result of this insight, "he thinks . . . it is good reason that I should serve him."[141] Motivation, through understanding, results. The Christian believes that if Christ has done this magnificent work on his behalf, then surely he should dedicate his life to the obedience required. Thus the Spirit gives the individual a reason for obedient living. (b) But the Spirit also changes the affections, "for he begets love in us, which love sanctifieth us, it sets us on work, and turns the whole heart, as the rudder turns the ship."[142] This change in the affections allows one to give up self-love in favor of the love of Christ. Preston writes:

> Sanctification is nothing else but a setting ourselves apart from common uses, and keeping of the heart close to God, making it peculiar to him, and this love makes us to do: when the wife loves the husband, she will be his altogether, she will be only to him, she will be divorced from all Adulterers, and have nothing to do with them; and thus the Lord deals with the affections.[143]

(c) God also acts to change the believer's self-conception. He now feels that it is best for his person to draw near to Christ, "so that now not only love to Christ, but even self-love also is set on work to the making us new creatures."[144] A man's perspective changes, and he learns that he shall have life only by giving his life in obedience to Christ. (d) Another change that occurs involves the fact that "when a man is justified and hath taken Christ, there is bred in him a holy ingenuity which makes him so thankful to Christ, that he is ashamed to join Christ with any sin."[145] The individual is so overwhelmed by gratefulness, he vows to "shun whatever may offend" Christ. (e) Finally, "as soon as a man hath taken Christ, and is justified, there is a strong impression made upon his soul, by which he is caused to cleave unto him, and to long after him."[146] One learns that he will be satisfied only through service to Christ. This was the experience of Peter and Andrew when Christ called them: ". . . they needed no more persuasion, for there was a secret impression made upon their hearts together with Christ's word, and to satisfy that they must needs follow him."[147] Thus the believer receives a "strong Instinct" to love and serve Christ, and thus he must progress in the path of sanctification as a way to find satisfaction. In summary of these points, Preston writes:

> . . . when a man shall see such reason for holiness, when he shall have affections of delight therein, of love thereto, when he shall see it best for him, and that it is impossible he should have the Lord Jesus Christ (whom he so much desires) if he serve him not in the duties of sanctification, he must needs come to

> a fixed resolution, I will be another man, and run another course, I will change my life altogether, I will serve him in holiness and in the duties of new obedience.[148]

For these reasons then, sanctification arises from justification.

But Preston also wants to argue that justification and sanctification are inseparable. This is an important doctrine, states Preston, because

> we may see by the lives of men that they are not persuaded of it, for their lives be loose, and they think that if they can call on Christ in the day of death, and cry for pardon, it will be enough, and that without such strictness a man may be saved.[149]

Such men are mistaken, for when the Christian is ingrafted into Christ, he is grafted into the similitude of Christ's death and resurrection, and thus not only is sin crucified in him, but he is also raised to newness of life. Christ came not only to save men, but to make new creatures, "to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works, and to destroy out of man the works of the devil, and to purchase to himself a holy generation and a royal priesthood."[150] Sanctification is the necessary consequence of justification.

One can also express this doctrine by arguing that Christ is a Prophet and King as well as a Priest,

> and, therefore, if you will be saved by him, by the virtue of his Priesthood, you must take him as a Prophet, that is, you must take his

> counsel in all things, and not only so, but he must also be your King; you must not only learn his way, but you must also be perfectly subject and obedient to him.[151]

As King, Christ brings the believer to subjection, demanding obedience of the will.

The reader will recall that, according to Preston's thought, the first part of the covenant of grace involves the forgiveness of sins, the second part the promise of sanctification, and the third part the promise to provide the Christian with all things that are necessary. Preston uses the doctrine of the inseparability of sanctification and justification as a way of prodding the believer to remind God of his covenantal promise to create a new heart, once the individual's sins have been forgiven.

> We should go to God and beseech him, that having given us [justification] that he would grant us [sanctification] also. If you have any assurance that your sins are forgiven you, let him not deny you this, to make you New Creatures, they be inseparable, and therefore you have just cause to pray him not to separate them.[152]

Preston goes so far as to say that "you may sue him of his own bond written and sealed, and he cannot deny it; therefore beg it, and you cannot miss it."[153] Here we see one of the practical consequences of the type of covenantal relationship that is believed to exist between God and man. This is the kind of language that has led Perry Miller to write that when the Puritans used the word "covenant" they "understood just such a contract as was used among men of business, a bond or a mortgage, an agreement between two parties, signed and sworn to, and binding upon both."[154] We see Preston's attempt to demonstrate the way in which the contract obligated God. For the individual who becomes a member of the covenant, God has agreed not only to forgive the sin of that individual, but also to provide the Spirit who will change the heart. If one is convinced that his sins have been forgiven, yet his life has not become increasingly holy, he may "sue" God, forcing him to fulfill his part of the agreement.[155] The same type of conception can be used to remind the believer of his covenant obligations. But here one has a clear instance of the way in which a Puritan theologian thought of the covenant as obligating God as well as man. Therefore, writes Preston, "if there be any rebellion in your heart, any untowardness in your nature; if you go to him for the removal of it, it is impossible he should deny you, having made you a sure promise, and confirmed it with an oath . . . . What the Lord swears to, he is sure to perform."[156]

B. The Necessity of Obedience

Since justification and sanctification are inseparable, obedience is necessary and obligatory. "Do not think that you are in Christ, if you find not the New Creature."[157] The covenant of grace has a judgment associated with it just like the covenant of works: "Men that have lived without the knowing of Christ, they shall be judged by the law, but when we come to Christ, to live under the Gospel (as we all do) we shall be judged by the Gospel."[158] It is easy enough to see that he who does not accept Christ will be damned. But also, he who does not become a New Creature, that is, he who does not become sanctified, who does not engage in a life of obedience to the law, shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Thus at the moment of one's death, Satan "will come and lay thy sins to thy charge," and the individual will respond by saying "I am in Christ." "Well," writes Preston, "how dost thou prove that?"[159] The proof can only be found in the fact that the individual is a New Creature, displaying a sanctified life of holiness. If one is not a New Creature, he cannot be in Christ. The necessity for obedience arises out of the fact that

> if being in Christ, and being a New Creature be inseparable, think not that thou canst take Christ divided, that thou canst take him half, and leave the other part, that thou canst take him as a Savior, and not take him as a Prophet, and a King; think not to have justification, and to want sanctification.[160]

The sum of the Gospel is that men should "amend their lives." The obedience that makes the individual a New Creature "was pressed as a thing of absolute necessity, as well as the taking of Christ."[161] Thus one finds that the complete condition attached to the covenant of grace is faith that is followed by obedience to the law. The two cannot be separated. True obedience is impossible without faith, but faith that is not followed by obedience is not true faith. "Deceive not yourselves, apply not the promises of the Gospel, except you find this symptom of being in Christ, that you are made New Creatures."[162] Without sanctification, without holiness of life, one can be assured that he has not received justification. It is a covenantal requirement, that entrance into the covenant through faith be followed by a regenerate life that focuses its attention on the law of God.

The difference between a hypocrite and a true believer can be found in the fact that the hypocrite does not become a New Creature. The hypocrite, or "temporary believer," may have something of the experience of faith but he "partakes not of the fatness of the Root, he receives not life from the Root." Preston writes:

> Now an hypocrite may be built on him, as well as a true professor, but here is the difference, they are living stones, their nature is altered, they differ as much from themselves what they were before, as living things differ from dead stones; so it may be thou hast had an adhesion to the body of Christ, thou has stuck to it, as it were, but, if thou be a true member, then thou art knit to it by ligament and sinews.[163]

An individual may have had the experience of faith, may be a member of the church, but unless his life displays sanctification, unless he truly be a new creature, he has no

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assurance of salvation. "Examine thyself in this, deceive not thyself, to whomsoever he is made Righteousness, he is made Sanctification. It is impossible they should be disjoined."[164]

In The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love, Preston gives a concise summary of that which is required on the part of the believer after justification has occurred. First, one has the duty to love Christ. "It is required that you love your Husband, Jesus Christ, that you forsake Father and Mother, and become one Spirit with him, as man is one flesh with his wife. . . ."[165] Secondly, repentance is required, for without repentance, one can never be a part of the Kingdom of Christ. Repentance means that the individual "must no longer walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit; you must have your flesh crucified, with all the affections and lusts of it."[167] Thirdly, "you must part with everything for his sake, whether it be riches, or honors, or credit, or whatsoever, it is no matter, you must be ready to let them all go."[168] Total surrender is required. Fourthly, one must be willing to suffer for the cause of Christ: "You must be ready to undergo anything for his sake: you must have him for worse as well as for better: you must be content to be hated of all men for his sake, you must take up your cross, and follow him."[169] Fifthly, the believer must be willing to "do much" for Christ. Only through this kind of sacrifice can God "purchase to him a peculiar people, zealous of good works."[170] Therefore, one "must not look on his commandments as a hard task, where of you could willingly be excused, but as one that hath his heart inflamed to walk in them."[171] Thus, becoming a member of the covenant of grace involves much more than faith. Preston writes:

> But now men say, this is a hard condition, I little thought of it . . . . It is true, the condition is hard, and that is the reason that so few are willing to come in, when they understand these after-clap conditions, that they must part with all, that they must be persecuted, that their will must be perfectly subject to the will of Christ, that they must be holy as he is holy, that the same mind must be in them that is in Christ Jesus, that they must be of those peculiar people of God.[172]

The covenantal requirements on man's part are extensive. Faith involves only the first requirement: much more is demanded. But "if you will have Christ on these conditions, you may."[173]

Expressed theologically, these covenantal conditions mean that there must occur the mortification of the old man, made possible by the Spirit of Christ that is at work in the believer. Doing the "duties of new obedience" depends on the death of the old lusts and desires. Preston writes that

> if thou findest any corruptions continuing in the fulness of their first strength, not weakened at all, though thou hast all signs of grace, all parts of a New Creature . . . thou are deceived, because if thou wert new,

> there would be a mortification of the old lusts.[174]

One must also remember that it is possible for these lusts to appear dead, only to rise again: "If there be not a New Creature brought within thy soul, thy lusts are but laid asleep, they will rise again."[175] God requires a complete sacrificing of the Old Man. One can know whether this has occurred by examining those sinful inclinations which are peculiar to himself, for "you must know every man hath some personal infirmities, some sins more peculiar to his nature than others . . . ."[176] Successful mortification depends on the death of these personal evil desires.

> If thou findest that this [desire] continues with thee still . . . that there is no lessening, no weakening, no destroying and mortifying of that, then thou art not a New Creature, and consequently, thy sins are not forgiven, for justification and sanctification are inseparable.[177]

A hypocrite "can counterfeit many things," but not the successful mortification of the Old Man.[178] If you are a New Creature, "thou must find thyself able to do that which no natural man can do, and which thyself could never do before."[179] The hypocrite will stumble when it comes to successful self-denial. God requires nothing less than a change in nature. Moral virtues, transient acts of holiness, and good intentions may be displayed by the hypocrite. What is required is a total change in nature, permitting the Old

Man to die, and the New Man to live. Without this change one will eventually return to sin.

In this discussion of the necessity for obedience, Preston wishes to argue also that zeal turns away the wrath of God, "because it is coldness and lukewarmness that brings on his wrath."[180] Zeal is understood to be "nothing else but the intention of all holy affections and actions."[181] The change in affections must be followed by action. Preston writes:

> . . . it is action that glorifies God, and that benefits men, only actions stand on our reckoning: for you know God judgeth every man according to his works. It is action that doth our selves good, that makes us useful, and servicable to men, and the Church, that makes us instruments of God's glory. Therefore add action to affection, and know that zeal stands in both, for it is the intention of holy actions and affections.[182]

He who is not zealous is departing from covenant obligations, and thereby is likely to incur the wrath of God.

> We think it enough to go to Church, to receive the Sacrament . . . . But, I beseech you, consider it. Is this Religion. Is this the Power of Godliness . . . religion stands not in these outward formalities, but in changing the heart, in making us New Creatures, in mortifying our lusts, and thoroughly purging out the love of every corruption.[183]

Therefore, if the individual desires to turn away the wrath of God, he must turn his formality into zeal and not be content with anything less. Just as the individual can press God for the fulfillment of his covenant obligations, so God can demand that man live up to his responsibilities, and that includes a zealous desire to live the life of the new covenant man. One obtains justification by faith alone, but "you know God judgeth every man according to his works."

Preston, along with other Puritan preachers, used the Sacraments as a way of clarifying both God's covenantal promises and man's responsibilities. John von Rohr writes:

> Infants were in covenant by virtue of the faithfulness of their parents, and baptism was administered to them as a seal of that covenant relation. So Ball could say that remembrance of what God promised in baptism should serve 'to stay, support, and comfort the soul,' for there one 'shall find that his name is written in the Covenant of God,' and 'that God hath promised to wash away all his sins.' In similar fashion the Lord's Supper became certification of covenant-membership, constituting a renewal of the original covenant established in baptism . . . . John Preston . . . saw in it the certification of God's act of renewal, or at least of continuance, as if God used to say, 'I have promised to forgive you your sins, let the Sacrament witness against me, if I perform it not.'[184]

More explicitly, in a sermon delivered on the occasion of the Lord's Supper, Preston states that the sacrament is a seal of the Gospel and the covenant, and thus he recounts the priestly work of Christ, through which forgiveness of sins is possible. But the occasion of the sacrament is also used as a way of recounting what is expected of man: ". . . when Christ is thus given, you must serve him, and love him, and obey him, and turn from all your evil ways, you must be his, as he is yours."[185] Preston also states:

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> And as among men, when a man conveys either lands or money, to another man, they use to confirm the bargain . . . seals or with some sign or memorial, that when they forget the bargain, or deny it, or go about to break it, it may be said to them, this is your hand and seal, the thing is done, you have passed it, it cannot be recalled . . . . So the Lord here, when he hath made his Covenant with us, I will give you my Son, and you again shall give yourselves up to him, he puts his hand and seal to it, as it were, he adds this Sacrament that will be a witness against him, if he should go about to break the Covenant, as it is a witness against us, if we break the Covenant of faith and repentance that is required on our part.[186]

Thus, the occasion of baptism and the Lord's Supper are used not only as a way of deepening faith, but also of encouraging obedience, by reminding the people of their covenant commitments. The reader will recall that the same emphasis, in regard to baptism, was found in Calvin. Yet it seems evident that there was a growing interest on the part of the Puritans to use the Sacraments, particularly baptism, as a way of prompting obedience to the requirements of the covenant. Events in New England, leading to the Half-Way Covenant, confirm this judgment.

C. Content of Preston's Ethic

In its most simple form, the condition of the covenant of grace, as expressed in Genesis 17, is that the believer must "walk before me and be thou perfect." We have noted that the faith experience, which serves as entrance to the Covenant, must be followed by a life of obedience.

Preston's ethic is an obligatory ethic, in that it focuses on the necessity to obey God's law in order that the covenant relationship will remain firm.

Preston's ethic is influenced by the notion that one must always strive toward perfection. The goal is to become increasingly responsive to the will of God as it is known in the moral law of the Old Testament, and further refined in the New Testament. Preston uses the metaphors of "journey" and "walk" to describe this motif of progression. The Christian must never stand still; rather, he must constantly be working toward the successful completion of his "journey."

> To walk is still to be acting in something, still to be working, to be in employment, and not stand still . . . the whole course of this life is like a journey from one place to another . . . and every particular action is like so many steps taken to that journeys end, and look what the rounds are in a ladder, that go from the bottom to the top, look what the paces in a journey are, so many paces go to make up the journey, so doth every particular act go to make up the Christian course that every man is to fulfill.[187]

Every action, whether it be eating, drinking, recreation, or more serious moral behavior, is a step in this journey. Every movement "is a step nearer to God, and to heaven, if they be rightly used and from him."[188]

> Look what actions you do, see what they be, examine them at night; for every action is a step, and either you step toward heaven, or towards hell: therefore look to every action.[189]

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If one carries this metaphor further, there are five specific ways in which the Christian life is like a journey. First, in a journey there must be a place to which one desires to go. The Christian's goal is grace and righteousness, and thereby salvation will be obtained. Preston states:

> Labor to grow in peace, which enableth us to serve God, without which we can do nothing: labor also . . . to come to the fruits, and operations, and effects of it; that is, to spend your time in doing some things that may tend to God's glory, and service. And last of all, look at salvation which is the end of that journey, there is no question of the two former, that the end is grace and righteousness, there is more question of the latter, whether a man may make salvation.[190]

Since Preston sees the Christian life from the image of a journey, the question of assurance of salvation becomes very crucial. Not all men, who seek to assume the covenant, arrive at their destination. Successful completion of the journey is necessary for one to "make salvation." Thus every step in that journey becomes externally important. Consistency in ethical behavior becomes the criterion for determining if one is still heading toward the goal. Secondly, in a journey there is a place from which one has departed. In the Christian life, the journey begins with self-love and the state of sin. One leaves behind sin as he journeys toward righteousness, and ultimately, salvation. Thirdly, every journey involves a distance through which one

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must pass. In the Christian life, distance involves the dissimilitude between the believer's original self and the grace to which he is drawn. The progressive ethic of Preston focuses on the manner in which one must pass from sin and self-concern to total obedience to God, and the righteousness that that entails. Fourthly, in a walk or journey there "must be ground to walk upon," and the ground that the Christian has is the time that he has been granted by God. In a progressive, obligatory ethic, correct use of time becomes important. Finally, in a journey there is a path which is to be followed. In the Christian life, Christ is the path, as he is known through the Spirit and the Commandments. Word and Spirit cannot be separated, since their foundation is Christ.[191]

On the basis of this metaphor, Preston encourages the reader to examine very carefully the progress he has made in his covenantal responsibilities. "Except a man look narrowly to it, except he consider his steps from time to time, except he reflect upon them and look which way they tend, he will not be able to keep the ways of God's commandments."[192] This kind of self-reflection is necessary in order "to keep us in the right path." The Christian has no choice but to "run the way of God's commandments."[193] If one wishes to know whether he still be on the right path, he must examine whether or not he is living up to the law. The "shortest path" to the end of the journey, salvation, is to follow the commandments.[194] It is true that the path of the Christian is "broader" than that of the Jews, in that "we have more liberty than the Jews had in many things, we are freed from that yoke of bondage, that strict observation of Mosaical ceremonies."[195] Like Calvin, Preston has, in comparison with Luther, a narrow understanding of Christian freedom. Ceremonial law belongs to a previous age, but the moral law continues its force, and is indeed the corollary to faith in the conditions of the covenant. The pastoral use of the law is thus advocated; its legitimacy continues for the Christian, and the successful performance of the law is absolutely necessary for the covenant to remain in force, thereby assuring one of salvation.

After discussing the manner in which the Christian life is like a journey, Preston adds a further point. When it comes to judging the manner in which one is living up to his obligations, it is best to look at the consistency of one's behavior, rather than specific acts. Since "the best of the saints have been subject to divers failings," the individual must be judged on the whole "course" of one's life.[196] David was guilty of murder and adultery, but these actions must be weighed in light of his entire life. This manner of judging is as applicable to the reprobate as it

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is to the righteous. That is, Cain managed to do a few godly things, such as sacrifices made to God. Likewise, Judas was a disciple and, outwardly, a follower of Christ. But if one looks at the entire life of a Cain or a Judas, it becomes evident that he has not followed the right path, being insensitive to the Spirit and the commandments. "Therefore, I say, we are not to be judged by a few actions, and a few paces, but by the constant tenor of our life, by what we do in ordinary, and usual course."[197] Consistency of ethical behavior throughout one's lifetime thus becomes the means by which one can determine if he has fulfilled his covenant obligations. Preston writes:

> So learn to judge of thine own spirit, by that constancy that thou findes in well-doing, or that mutability and unconstancy that thou art subject to. If a man would make a censure of himself, let him consider that the nearer he comes to unchangeableness in well-doing, the better he is and the stronger he is: again, the more mutable, the weaker.[198]

The pastoral insight of Preston was too profound to permit him to hold the position that a specific departure from covenantal law would endanger the covenantal relationship between the believer and God. Such departures are likely to occur. But at the same time, if these departures become consistent, then one must conclude that that individual has never experienced genuine faith. The progressive element in Preston's ethic thus focuses on "the constant tenor" of one's life, on the consistency of following covenantal law.

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One must look at the "constant stream" of one's disposition, for the true Christian, as opposed to the hypocrite, will surmount evil impulses.[199] There are those who appear to be walking the correct course, but their godly behavior is "transitory": "A man may walk in a good course whose heart is not yet right, and yet long he shall not do it, because those outward occasions shall be took from him."[200] Ultimately, evil will predominate in the hypocrite, as the "constant tenor" of his life will demonstrate.

The basic premise of Preston's ethic centers in his belief that the individual who assumes a covenantal relationship with God must be "perfect."

> That is, he must be sincere, he must have integrity of heart; though he may be subject to many infirmities, yet God requires this of him; if I be All-sufficient, sayeth he, to any man he must be perfect with me: I am All-sufficient, therefore be thou perfect, otherwise thou has no interest in the All-sufficiency of mine.[201]

In his use of the word "perfect" Preston is not implying that a one hundred percent performance of the law is required. Rather, he is pointing to basic characteristics of the heart; the individual is to be perfect, in his sincerity and integrity. Preston gives five reasons why "no man shall be saved, nor ever have part in this All-sufficiency of God, except he be perfect, except he have integrity of heart."[202] First, integrity of heart is possible and necessary, otherwise one would have to conclude that "the first Adam should be more powerful to communicate sin, than the second to instill grace."[203] Integrity of heart is made possible through the grace of Christ; if this were not so, then the sin of Adam would be stronger than the grace of Christ. Secondly, sincerity and integrity are possible, otherwise "the work of redemption should not be perfect." Even though man remains imperfect, the work of redemption is perfect, changing the heart, so that eventually, despite the failing of man, the seed that has been sown will ripen into fulness.[204] Thirdly, integrity of heart is possible, otherwise God's commands would be impossible. If there were not integrity of heart in those who are to be saved, "the commands of the gospel should be commands of impossibility: for the Gospel requires at our hands, that we should have respect to all the commandments, that we should keep the whole law in an evangelical manner . . . it requires (in a word) that we should keep the whole law, in that sense, so as to square our lives to it."[205] Fourthly, sincerity and integrity of heart are possible, otherwise the covenant would be unilateral, rather than bilateral. The Bible clearly states that "'I will walk perfectly with them that walk perfectly with me'; these are the terms of the Covenant."[206] Fifthly, this sincerity and integrity is possible and is required "because otherwise, all that we do

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is nothing, it is to no purpose: for except you seek the Lord and serve the Lord with a perfect heart you serve him not at all, you cannot serve him as God . . . except your hearts be perfect with him."[207] After reviewing these five points, Preston concludes: "Therefore, I say, the heart must be perfect or else the obedience is nothing at all."[208]

Having discussed the priority Preston gives to the necessity of sincerity and integrity, we may now move to a discussion of the characteristics of these attributes. First, there must be purity of heart. That heart is pure "which hath no sin in it, which is holy, which hath a renewed quality of grace, which hath an inward regenerate man, that will mingle with no sin . . . ."[209] Sin may still cleave to the man, but "it mingles not with the regenerate part . . . it enters not into the frame and constitution of a man's heart . . . ."[210] Thus the heart is imperfect not by virtue of having impurities within it, but the mingling of these impurities "with the inward frame of the heart."[211] Secondly, a perfect heart is one that has the characteristic of simplicity. That is, the regenerate man with a perfect heart is a "single-minded" man as opposed to a "double-minded" man; he does not have sundry goals, rather he has one eye that casts its glance at one object only, and that is God.[212] Thirdly, the perfect heart must have integrity, which consists of "the integrity of the subject, the integrity of the object, and the integrity of the mean, whereby the subject and the object are joined together."[213] The subject is the heart of man, the object consists of the commandments, and that which allows the heart and commandments to come together is divine activity. Fourthly, perfectness involves uprightness or straightness. This means that the true believers will always seek to do the will of God, attempting "to be faithful and diligent in his calling."[214] One can ascertain whether or not he is doing the will of God by referring to the commandments, for "they are the true Israel that keep the right rule."[215] Again, we must note the fact that law retains its validity in directing the Christian life. The will of God is found in the moral law, and he who does not keep the moral law certainly is not a member of the covenant. Fifthly, perfectness in heart consists of the willigness to join the army of God in the fight against evil. The perfect heart will endure the trials involved in this fight, never ultimately succumbing to the enemy.

Having examined the characteristics of the sincere and perfect heart, we are in a position to set forth Preston's understanding of the manner in which this heart functions. First, the truly regenerate man is one who has a willingness to do and suffer anything that God commands. In response to an inquiry about entrance into the Kingdom of God, Jesus said: "Go sell all that you have." The commands of God will be followed, without respect for one's external and material existence. Secondly, the truly regenerate man will be striving continually for perfection. Preston writes:

> Not that you should reach [the Father's] perfection, for who can ever do it? But the meaning of it is this, there must be as great a length, as great a breath, and latitude in your perfection as in his, your perfection is known by his commandments . . . if it come short in anything, and it be not as long, and as broad, it is unsound, and lame, and imperfect obedience, that shall be cast away as evil, and counterfeit: for you must be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect.[216]

The way in which one can find out whether his heart is perfect or not is to consider "whether you walk so exactly that you have not only an eye to the main points of every commandment, but you observe the least particle of every commandment, the least iota, least point, that you find in every commandment. Except you do this, I say, your hearts are not perfect."[217] The pastoral function of the law is thus taken to its extreme. Sincerity of heart is equated with the performance of the "least particle of every commandment." But it is important to realize that Preston strives hard to combine this emphasis on law with the emphasis on grace. Therefore, Preston wishes to say to those who reply that this kind of performance of the law is a "hard condition" of the covenant:

> You must know this, that Jesus Christ hath give to all those that shall be saved grace for grace;

> that even as he requires perfection of obedience, in a latitude answerable to all the commandments, to all the particles of them, even a perfection answerable to his own perfection; so he hath given us grace for grace, that is, he hath given us an inward ability of graces which answer every commandment.[218]

The moral law cannot be kept without the grace of Christ. This is the reason why the hypocrite will eventually fail; he has not sufficient grace to sustain the constant striving for perfection. The practical implication of Preston's position is that he who can keep the moral law can be assured that he has received the grace of Christ, that he is indeed a member of the covenant of grace. Likewise, he who fails in keeping the moral law, must conclude that he has not received the grace of Christ, and thus is outside the covenant. Preston argues that he who does not keep the law, even the "lesser commandments," is "unsound, and rotten at the heart, he shall never be saved continuing such, for the confirmation of it I will name but one place, Proverbs 19:16: 'He that keeps the commandments, keeps his own soul, but he that despiseth his way, shall die': that is, he that keeps the commandments every way, that looks to all the commandments, and every particle of them."[219] In this connection, it should be noted that Preston, like Calvin, employs the principle of synecdoche. Thus in the commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," one must remember that there is an adultery of the eye, tongue, thought, etc.

Thirdly, there is a constant repentance in the life of the truly regenerate man. Even though the godly man may sin, he will repent of this sin, thereby purifying his heart. Preston states:

> You may take this for a sure rule, that, take a man whose heart is not sound, all the admonitions, all the mercies, all the afflictions, all the experience that he can gain by all the passages of God's providence towards him, and about him, will not keep him from returning to his sin, but still he falls back to it again, and again . . . but with a man that hath a sound heart, that is perfect, it is not so, he does not easily return again, but though he doth fall for a time . . . yet he still cleanseth himself.[220]

The striving toward perfection must include constant repentance, for only through repentance can one gain the proper attitude that will permit one to not repeat the sin.

Fourthly, the ethical behavior of the truly regenerate man is founded on right motives, which include the desire to serve God rather than self, to work toward the glory of God. An example of the opposite tendency can be found in the Jews, who, after famine or war, returned to God, only to go about sinning once again after the immediate crisis ended. Denial of self-interest is the foundation of all covenantal morality.

Fifthly, the ethical conduct of the regenerate man must reflect a continually growing understanding. The corollary of correct ethical behavior is a growing awareness of the nature of sin and grace. When one enters by faith

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into the covenant "he doth not always know new things, he hath not new things revealed unto him, more than he knew before, but the same things he knows now as he ought to know . . . ."[221] This means that the regenerate man has keener insight into the nature of good and evil, and thus his ethical decisions are accordingly influenced.

The basic motifs of Preston's ethic can now be seen. The individual who is firmly within the covenant of grace will demonstrate a constant willingness to do all that God bids him do, he will continually strive for perfection, he will constantly engage in repentance, his action will stem from right motives, and his ethical behavior will be in tune with a growing understanding of spiritual reality.

Preston also gives the reader a discussion of the practical effects that sincerity and integrity of heart will have on the individual. First, integrity of heart will lead to a life of self-denial, in that "it teacheth a man to exalt God in all his ways, to lift up God in all his ways, above himself . . . above any thing that tends to his own happiness."[222] Secondly integrity of heart will allow the individual to do only that which God commands. One is "not moved to his main actions ordinarily, but by virtue of some command from God, if he have not some such motive, he stands still, and stirs not."[223] Thirdly, he who has integrity of heart will apply all his strength to his ethical decisions,

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"to serve the Lord, to do his will with all a man's might, to do it exceedingly diligently, not only to have respect to his commandments, but to do it with all a man's might and strength . . . when a man doth it diligently, it is a sign he doth it with a perfect heart."[224] Fourthly, every grace of God will be expressed in ethical conduct.

> A man whose heart is entire and upright, and perfect with God, you shall find him thus disposed, he suffers every grace to have its perfect work: that is a sign the heart is sound and entire, and perfect, when the graces of God are not restrained . . . but are suffered to have their perfect work.[225]

Patience, temperance, charity emerge from specific graces. Fifthly, the individual with integrity of heart will display a sense of peace:

> When any man's heart is perfect with God, you shall find this effect rising from it, that his heart is quiety, and humble, and gentle, and peaceable towards me, full of love and of mercy and good fruits, and of good actions and works.[226]

Thus, a pure heart breeds quietness and peace, whereas the heart that lacks integrity is full of tumult and turbulence. Finally, sincerity of heart leads to a more complete vision of God. This is the meaning of the promise, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

IV. The Question of Assurance

A. The Problematical Nature of Assurance in Preston's Theology

The background for the problematical nature of certainty of salvation in Preston's thought can be found in the type of covenant conception that is employed. The legal nature of this concept results in an emphasis on obligation. Upon entering into the covenant, the individual is required to fulfill the conditions that God has set forth. The full covenantal requirement includes faith and obedience. Assurance of salvation depends then on the continuation of the covenantal relationship, and this occurs only where the faith experience is followed by a life of holiness. Both the experience of faith and the ensuing regeneration are possible only through the work of Christ. Preston, like Calvin, stresses the unconditionality of the covenant: human merit is not involved in God's extension of the covenant to the individual, and in the giving of the Holy Spirit who instills faith and promotes sanctification. Earlier in the chapter, we noted that the decrees of God concerning reprobation and salvation are known only to God. In seeking assurance, the individual must then examine his covenantal status, for only by ascertaining whether one has fulfilled the covenantal requirements of faith and obedience can he be assured that he has been predestined to salvation.

The problematical nature of assurance develops from Preston's belief that the hypocrite may have something of the experience of faith. We have noted the many reasons for ineffectual faith. The individual may even be convinced that he has had his sins forgiven. How then is one to gain assurance of salvation? How can one know whether he be in the conditional or the absolute covenant of grace? The answer, according to Preston, lies in the ethical behavior of the individual. The person with "counterfeit" faith will be unable to live the kind of holy life that is demanded by the covenant requirements, because the Spirit of Christ is not at work in him. The hypocrite will stumble when it comes to self-denial. There will exist peculiar and personal sins which he is unable to subdue. This person is then forced to conclude that his sins have never been forgiven, justification has not occurred. But we have also noted that Preston is concerned with the ethical consistency of one's life. Even the saint will err, but the general tenor of his life will result in the successful subduing of the old man. Therefore, in the last analysis, assurance of salvation must come through obedience. For only through obedience can one conclude that justification has occurred, and that the Spirit of Christ is within him.[227]

B. On Breaking the Covenant

As a result of the problematical nature of assurance, Preston is forced to give consideration to determining how one might ascertain whether the covenantal relationship between God and himself has remained firm. In his book, The New Covenant, Preston begins his analysis of the broken covenant by remarking:

> You must know, that the Covenant is then dissolved, when that is dissolved that did make the Covenant. Look what it is that puts a man into the Covenant of Grace at the first; when that is taken away, then the Covenant of Grace is disannulled between God and us, but till then the Covenant remains sure.[228]

What is it that makes the covenant? The covenant is made when God freely and without concern for human merit offers Christ to believers, who then "come and take the promised seed and give our consent to make him our Lord, and we subject ourselves to him to be his; when we say to the promised seed, he shall be my God and my governor, and I will be among his people, and be subject to him."[229] The covenantal relationship begins with God's gracious activity, coupled with human response, made possible by the grace of God, of faith and obedience. Therefore, argues Preston,

> . . . as long as this union continues between Christ and us, the Covenant is not disannulled, so that, in a word, the Covenant is never nullified, until thou has chosen to thyself another husband, till thou has taken to thyself another Lord.[230]

God will not break the covenant; only the activity of man can be responsible for endangering the relationship.

But the covenant is not broken until one commits "spiritual adultery," when one chooses to serve another Master, when one marries another "husband." This means that committing a particular sin will not necessarily endanger the covenantal relationship. "Beloved, this is a point exceeding full of comfort: thou must not think that upon every sin the Covenant is over-thrown between God and thee."[231] With this position we are driven back to Preston's concern with the general tenor or consistency of one's life. What counts in the Christian pilgrimage is not the occasion of failing, but the successive, consistent movement toward the right goal. This is why Preston states: "So long as a man doth not choose another Husband, so long the Covenant is not broken, though the failing be exceeding many."[232] As long as the proper object is maintained, "spiritual adultery" will not occur. Preston thus develops a progressive ethic, in which one seeks to become increasingly more holy, while always focusing on Christ, as he is known in the Spirit and the law.

Preston gives the reader two rules by which he can ascertain whether or not the covenant has been broken. "The first is an immediate examination of thine own heart . . . ."[233] One must examine himself to determine whether there

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is any sin in his heart which is of an adulterous nature.

> Look narrowly to this, if there be any creature in the World, any pleasure, any profit, any matter of credit or honor or whatsoever the thing be, any delight, or Sport, or inclination, or lust, where with thy heart commits adultery, certainly thou has chosen another Husband, whatsoever thou pretendest.[234]

Thus, it is not so much the sin itself that is of ultimate concern but the importance given to that sin by the individual. "If there be any sin that thou art in league with, thou hast broken the Covenant."[235] It is a matter of changing loyalties, switching partners, and losing sight of the goal. But how can one determine whether the sinful act involves this change in loyalty? Preston has an answer: "You shall know it by this, if it divert and put out, and quench the love to your husband."[236] The issue thus centers in whether or not the affections have changed. The wife may

> do service to him, she performs, it may be every duty as carefully, and as diligently as the best wife in the world, and yet for all this her heart is gone . . . if thou find this thy case that thou art so in love, that thy heart is stolen away with anything in the world, with matters of estate, pleasures, or whatsoever it is . . . , it is certain thou has chosen another husband.[237]

If the disposition of love towards Christ is gone, then the covenant has been broken. But if the individual still delights in God, desires to please him, to be in his company, to serve him, then the covenant has remained firm.

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The second rule that Preston gives for determining whether the covenant has been broken is to examine "the effects" of the disposition. Here the individual is thrust back to the area of morality for ascertaining his covenantal status.

> Look to it now, art thou overcome with sin? Dost thou obey sin, when it comes with a command upon thee: dost thou commit sin? Certainly thou hast chosen another Husband, thou doest deceive thyself.[238]

But, again, dissolving the covenant involves more than committing a particular sin. Preston focuses on "a sin [that] is drawn out as a thread in the course of thy life."[239] What is important is whether the sin has become repetitive, whether consistency falters, thus indicating a change in the heart. But at the same time, argues Preston, Scripture does teach that a sinful act itself can break the covenant. For instance, God commanded Saul to destroy the Amalikites, and when he failed in this task, his covenantal relationship to God was annulled, for he chose "another Lord, another Husband." Therefore, when the individual receives a commandment from God, when he knows that a particular course of action is God's will, or that he must abstain from some particular sin,

> when a man comes to the keeping of it, and his heart find out excuses . . . when the heart deliberates . . . when the heart works according to its own proper inclination, and then disobeys the Lord in any commandment, certainly then it casts away.[240]

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In this situation, the sin receives its importance because the proper act is known to be the will of God, and a flagrant disregard of that will demonstrates that one has departed from God, and thus the covenant is broken.

In spite of the seemingly precarious implications of this doctrine of the broken covenant, Preston ends his discussion by demonstrating how the doctrine can be used to gain comfort from the stability of the covenant. Even though a man may commit numerous sins,

> so long as he hath the Lord for his Husband, as long as he is not willing to choose another master, still the Covenant is sure . . . Comfort yourselves with these words, and make use of the Covenant, and apply the promises of the Covenant, say this with thyself, it is very true, I am sinful, I provoke God . . . yet for all this, I am not out of the Covenant and therefore the promises of the Covenant belong to me.[241]

Furthermore, God's covenantal promises include the promise of sanctification, and thus if there be some "strong lust, some violent temptation, that thou art not able to outwrestle," one must remember that God has promised to give the Spirit of regeneration.

> Remember that it is a part of the Lord's Covenant, that he will deliver thee from all thine enemies, that thou mayest serve him in righteousness and holiness . . . . It is a part of his Covenant to remember it, he hath sworn to remember it . . . he hath promised to give thee a new heart and a new spirit, now consider this, it is a part of his Covenant, that is the way for thee to over come it.[242]

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In spite of the fact that the covenant can be broken, Preston maintains that "when thou art within the Covenant, there is no creature in Heaven or Earth [that] can do thee hurt."[243] Here one sees the influence of Preston's doctrine of election. If one is elected to salvation, he may suffer temporal punishment for his sin, but he will not be dismissed from the covenant. Likewise, he who is not in the absolute covenant, he who has only counterfeit faith,

> he may live in his Father's house, he may sit at table with the children, he may have the same maintenance, the same clothing, the same usage, the same liberty, the same privileges of the family as the children have, and yet for all this, this is one that belongs not to the Covenant but one whom God intends to cast out.[244]

The person with counterfeit faith may for a time have a sense of comfort, "but in due time, when the right season shall come, then [he] shall be cast out, and everyone with whom the Covenant indeed is not established."[245] He who commits spiritual adultery, must never have had the experience of genuine faith. For example, one can turn to the children of Israel. They did experience the grace of God, for God delivered them from Egypt and Babylon, "yet not withstanding all this, these men were such as God hated, such as were not in league, as belonged not to the Covenant."[246] By way of this example, and Preston's analysis of it, we see the problematical nature of assurance.

> Deceive not thy self: God may do all this, and yet cast thee out; he may feed thee with riches in abundance, and yet if you be not a son, if the Covenant be not established with thee, thou shalt be cast out. The Son abides forever, but he with whom the Covenant is not made, though he may continue in the family for a while, he shall not abide long, but shall be cast forth.[247]

Ethical behavior becomes important then, because it is only in the area of morality that one can gain assurance that his faith is effectual and not counterfeit, that he belongs to the absolute and peculiar covenant of grace.

C. Ascertaining One's Covenantal Status

As a result of the problematical nature of assurance in his theology, Preston becomes very specific in determining the difference between the hypocrite and the true believer. The differences are to be found in the area of morality. It has been observed that unevenness of behavior can be found in the best of saints. This must be expected,

> for if there be something new and something old, there must needs be an unevenness, as where there be two contrary principles, moving two contrary ways . . . therefore be not discouraged, that you are not perfect in all things.[248]

But there is a "great difference" between the unevenness that befalls the saint, and the unevenness of the hypocrite. Preston lists four primary differences.

First, the true believer, even though he may on occasion relapse into sin, "gets ground of sin," while the hypocrite, "the oftener he falls, the more sin gathers strength, and even the goodness he seemed to have had, is lessened more and more, till at length it be quite abolished."[249] The true believer will use the relapse as a way of uncovering corruptions of the heart, so that correction can be made, and the sin, hopefully, will not be repeated.

Secondly, "though a Godly man fall back to sin again and again, yet he never falls back to the allowance of any sin."[250] The inner disposition of the true believer is different from that of the hypocrite, and therefore the former does not permit the sin to remain. The sin of the hypocrite will result in a resolution to continue in that sin.

Thirdly, "there is a difference in their manner of overcoming" the sin. The godly man will seek to preserve himself from the sin, to keep the sin at a distance from his true nature, so that the soul will not be overcome by the sin.

Fourthly, " . . . there is this difference between them; he that hath a perfect heart, he that is sound-hearted, while he is himself, he never relapseth into sin."[251] Here, Preston refers to the verse in the seventh chapter of Romans, "it is no longer I, but sin that dwelleth in me." When temptation comes, and the individual is overcome by it, the real disposition of the heart is not involved, but only the sin that remains in the godly heart. Sin in the hypocrite retains its force because the inner disposition of the heart is not truly directed toward Christ.

Thus the real difference centers in the fact that "the saints have certain fits, but they are sick of sin, the others are sick of goodness and godliness which they have, and are never well till they be set at liberty again, that they may walk again in their old ways, so there is great difference in the degrees."[252] In the last analysis, the hypocrite is unable to produce the fruits of obedience, and this is so, not out of "weakness of grace," but "out of falseness of heart." The hypocrite may do some good works "but they are but blossoms, there is something green, but they are but blades . . . a thing must be ripe before it can be called good fruit, they never bring forth ripe fruit . . . they bring forth sour grapes."[253]

It is true that the experience of faith itself can offer some assurance. But Preston, when developing this notion, always qualifies the doctrine with his understanding of counterfeit faith and the necessity of good works. For instance, Preston writes:

> And so, if thou believe, it is certain then, thou art in the Covenant . . . . But how shall a man know whether his faith be right or no? For, you know, there is a false, dead and counterfeit faith . . . . If it be right, thou shalt find it to be of a working and lively nature, but many times we may be deceived in

> that. A woman many times thinks she is with child, but if she find no motion or stirring it is an argument she was deceived: So when a man thinks that he hath faith in his heart but yet he finds no life, no motion, no stirring, there is no work proceeding from his faith, it is an argument he was mistaken, he was deceived in it: For if it be a right faith, it will work, there will be life and motion in it.[254]

Yet, there are certain characteristics of the faith experience itself, which allows one to determine if his experience has been genuine. The person with genuine faith has experienced the terrors of conscience prior to receiving the Spirit of Christ. Also, through the experience of faith, if the person can say "I see I am renewed in the spirit of my mind; I see I am washed from my filthiness, I see my conscience in some measure cleansed from dead works," then the individual can conclude "surely I am in the state of grace, I am in the Covenant."[255] In reply to the question, "what is the seal or witness of the Spirit?" Preston writes: ". . . it is a thing that we cannot express, it is a certain divine expression of light, a certain unexpressible assurance that we are the sons of God."[256] When the individual receives the witness of the Spirit, "there follows a wondrous quiet, and peaceableness, and calmness in the heart."[257]

However, argues Preston, it is possible to be deceived. How then can one be sure that his experience of faith be genuine, and not counterfeit? Preston answers this question:

> if thou be one that art able to overcome temptations, and unruly affections, and sinful lusts, thou mayest conclude, it is a true testimony that thou art not deceived, but if thou be one that art overcome with every base lust, with every temptation, thou art deceived, if thou art persuaded thou art in good estate.[258]

Here one finds a position that is being taken that was noted earlier in regard to Calvin's theology: one needs assurance of his experience of assurance, and that can be found in the area of morality. Thus, Preston states:

> Now if thou be one that breaketh the Commandments of God, that findest not that holy fire in thy breast . . . and yet thou hast these great flashes of assurance, and think thy state good, thou deceivest thyself, the Lord hath not showed himself to thee, but it is a delusion.[259]

A life of obedience will follow from the genuine experience of faith. If the individual has received the promises of grace, "then you will cleanse yourself from all pollution of flesh and spirit. So by this thou mayst know whether thou has the Spirit of adoption, whether thou has applied the Covenant of Grace."[260] The person who does not do the "duties of obedience" has a "false and dread hope," for if it were a true and lively hope "it would get thee a work to purge thyself." Therefore, writes Preston, "you see the difference between the assurance of faith, and of presumption . . . if it be presumptuous, a false assurance, upon false grounds, there follows no such cleansing."[261]

It has already been noted that the hypocrite may do good works, but ultimately he will stumble, succumbing to the true nature of his heart. Likewise, it has been observed that the sins of the hypocrite are of a different nature from the relapses of the man with genuine faith. Preston adds a further note:

> A man may do exceeding many duties, he may suffer martyrdom, he may give all to the poor, he may be a very diligent minister of the Gospel . . . and yet if these great works be done without love, they are nothing.[262]

Here is another difference between the hypocrite and the true believer. The latter's ethical behavior is not only more consistent, it also is qualitatively different, in that the motivating force behind the behavior is love, and this force is possible only through the work of the Spirit of Christ in the believer. Faith "is the point of the Compass, that fastens upon the Covenant, but love is the other part . . . that doth all the business, it is that which keeps the commandments, it is that which quickens us to every good work."[263] This love stems from the kindness and goodness of God, who has shown the believer what love really is. Therefore, assurance comes not simply from engaging in a life of obedience, but from an awareness that these works are done in a spirit of love. If one's ethical behavior is done out of compulsion or merely a feeling for duty, that person has counterfeit faith, for he knows not the meaning of love.

Thus, the person who possesses genuine faith has "an inward aptness and propensity to keep the law of God."[264]

One must turn to morality as a way of gaining assurance of one's covenantal status. "If you want to know whether this [change of heart] be in you or not," writes Preston, "then consider whether your works be altered."[265] "We have a rule in philosophy, and a true one, and we will apply it here: 'As a thing is in being, so it is in working.'"[266] Therefore, to know the true nature of one's heart, and thereby one's covenantal relationship, "look to what thou doest."[267]

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

[1] John Preston, The New Covenant, Or The Saints Portion (London, 1634), pp. 317-318. To facilitate clarity it has been necessary to change the spelling and punctuation of some of the Preston statements used in this dissertation.

[2] In developing the doctrine of the Covenant of Works, the Puritans were thus expanding notions found in the early Reformed tradition, including Calvin. C. J. Sommerville reports that Dudley Fenner was the first English writer to put forward the notion of a double covenant, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, as found in his Sacra Theologia (1585). See Sommerville, "Conversion Versus the Early Puritan Covenant of Grace," Journal of Presbyterian History, 44, Summer, 1966, pp. 178-197.

[3] Perry Miller, The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century (Boston, 1954), p. 377.

[4] In his analysis of the Puritan doctrine of the covenant of works, Homes Rolston writes: "The whole theological enterprise remains coloured by the primal covenant. The covenant of grace does not replace the covenant of works but is worked out and established within it . . . . It is a careless reading of Federal theology to assume that the covenant of works is no longer important because man no longer lives in a state of integrity or because it has been replaced by the covenant of grace. The first covenant remains as the necessary pre-condition and framework of the second covenant. Chronologically and logically for covenant theology grace came and comes only after sin. God demonstrates his grace to man only after man is unable to provide his own works. The important thing is that the whole understanding of divine grace has to be worked out as a second covenant introduced with the failure of the first. There is no real cause to speak of the grace of God until after man sins. Grace is a remedy and second resort, however wonderful that remedy may be." In developing this doctrine, Rolston believes the Puritans were departing from Calvin, in that Calvin holds that Adam was to live "by faith," and while he was to be obedient to the law, such obedience was possible only through faith.

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Furthermore, meritorious obedience was not involved in Adam's relationship to God. Toward the end of the thesis, we shall attempt to analyze further Rolston's argument. For Rolston's position, see "Responsible Man in Reformed Theology," Scottish Journal of Theology 23 (May, 1970), pp. 129-156.

[5] The New Covenant, p. 318.

[6] The New Covenant, pp. 319-320.

[7] The New Covenant, p. 319.

[8] The New Covenant, pp. 320-321.

[9] The New Covenant, p. 321.

[10] The New Covenant, pp. 321-322.

[11] The New Covenant, p. 326.

[12] For these concepts, see The New Covenant, pp. 326-330.

[13] The New Covenant, p. 434.

[14] The New Covenant, p. 445.

[15] John Preston, The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love (London, 1630), p. 38. The conditional covenant of grace is sometimes referred to as the "single" covenant, while the absolute and peculiar covenant of grace is sometimes referred to as the "double" covenant.

[16] John Preston, Life Eternal, or A Treatise of the Knowledge of the Divine Essence and Attributes (London, 1634), Part II, p. 86.

[17] Life Eternal, Part II, pp. 86-87.

[18] Life Eternal, Part II, p. 80.

[19] Life Eternal, Part II, p. 80.

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[20] *Life Eternal*, Part II, pp. 80-81.

[21] *Life Eternal*, Part II, p. 81.

[22] *Life Eternal*, Part II, p. 82.

[23] *Life Eternal*, Part II, p. 83.

[24] *Life Eternal*, Part II, p. 83.

[25] *Life Eternal*, Part II, p. 83.

[26] *Life Eternal*, Part II, pp. 83-84.

[27] *Life Eternal*, Part II, pp. 84-85.

[28] *Life Eternal*, Part II, pp. 84-85.

[29] *Life Eternal*, Part II, p. 85.

[30] *Life Eternal*, Part II, p. 92.

[31] *Life Eternal*, Part II, p. 92.

[32] *Life Eternal*, Part II, p. 92.

[33] *Life Eternal*, Part II, p. 93.

[34] *Life Eternal*, Part II, p. 94.

[35] *Life Eternal*, Part II, p. 94.

[36] *Life Eternal*, Part II, p. 98.

[37] *Life Eternal*, Part II, p. 99.

[38] Irvonwy Morgan, *Prince Charles's Puritan Chaplain* (London, 1957).

[39] Morgan, p. 162.

[40] Miller, p. 375.

[41] Miller, p. 375.

[42] Miller, p. 375.

[43] Miller, p. 376.

[44] The New Covenant, p. 316.

[45] Miller, p. 375.

[46] The New Covenant, pp. 330-331.

[47] The New Covenant, p. 331.

[48] The New Covenant, p. 332.

[49] The New Covenant, p. 38.

[50] The New Covenant, p. 217.

[51] The New Covenant, p. 351.

[52] The New Covenant, p. 351.

[53] The New Covenant, p. 357.

[54] The New Covenant, pp. 116-117.

[55] The New Covenant, p. 374.

[56] The New Covenant, p. 116.

[57] The New Covenant, p. 118.

[58] The New Covenant, p. 119.

[59] The New Covenant, p. 378.

[60] *The New Covenant*, pp. 379-380.

[61] *The New Covenant*, p. 381.

[62] *The New Covenant*, p. 107.

[63] *The New Covenant*, p. 357.

[64] *The New Covenant*, p. 359.

[65] *The New Covenant*, p. 360.

[66] *The New Covenant*, p. 361.

[67] *The New Covenant*, p. 362.

[68] *The New Covenant*, p. 363.

[69] *The New Covenant*, p. 364.

[70] *The New Covenant*, p. 365.

[71] *The New Covenant*, p. 365.

[72] *The New Covenant*, p. 365.

[73] *The New Covenant*, p. 366.

[74] *The New Covenant*, p. 175.

[75] *The New Covenant*, pp. 180-181.

[76] *The New Covenant*, pp. 216-217.

[77] John Preston, *Saints Qualifications, or A Treatise of Humiliation and Sanctification* (London, 1637), p. 486.

[78] *Saints Qualifications*, p. 519.

[79] *The New Covenant*, pp. 120-121.

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[80] Saints Qualifications, p. 6.

[81] Saints Qualifications, p. 6.

[82] The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love, p. 104.

[83] The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love, p. 105.

[84] The New Covenant, p. 344.

[85] The New Covenant, pp. 344-345.

[86] The New Covenant, pp. 344-345.

[87] The New Covenant, pp. 344-345.

[88] Saints Qualifications, p. 103.

[89] Saints Qualifications, p. 12.

[90] Saints Qualifications, p. 17.

[91] Norman Pettit, The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life (New Haven, 1966).

[92] Pettit, p. 6.

[93] Pettit, p. 17.

[94] Pettit, p. 40.

[95] See Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Boston, 1953), Chapter IV.

[96] E. H. Emerson agrees with this judgment. See "Calvin and Covenant Theology," Church History XXV (1956), pp. 136-144. The importance of the doctrine of preparation will receive further consideration in the next chapter.

[97] Saints Qualifications, p. 20.

[98] *Saints Qualifications*, p. 20.

[99] *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love*, p. 42.

[100] *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love*, p. 42.

[101] *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love*, p. 42.

[102] *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love*, p. 43.

[103] *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love*, p. 43.

[104] *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love*, p. 44.

[105] *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love*, p. 45.

[106] *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love*, p. 47.

[107] *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love*, p. 48.

[108] *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love*, p. 44.

[109] *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love*, p. 48.

[110] *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love*, p. 101.

[111] *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love*, p. 102.

[112] *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love*, p. 115.

[113] *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love*, p. 121.

[114] *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love*, p. 123.

[115] *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love*, p. 123.

[116] *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love*, p. 123.

[117] *A Treatise of Effectual Faith* (London, 1631), p. 4.

[118] Effectual Faith, p. 6.

[119] Effectual Faith, p. 7.

[120] Effectual Faith, p. 9.

[121] Effectual Faith, p. 9.

[122] Effectual Faith, p. 11.

[123] Effectual Faith, p. 11.

[124] Effectual Faith, p. 12.

[125] Effectual Faith, p. 14.

[126] Effectual Faith, p. 17.

[127] Effectual Faith, p. 20.

[128] Effectual Faith, p. 26.

[129] Effectual Faith, p. 26.

[130] Effectual Faith, p. 26.

[131] Effectual Faith, p. 27.

[132] The New Covenant, p. 434.

[133] The New Covenant, p. 435.

[134] The New Covenant, p. 436.

[135] The New Covenant, p. 436.

[136] The New Covenant, p. 437.

[137] Saints Qualifications, p. 286.

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[138] Saints Qualifications, p. 287.

[139] Saints Qualifications, p. 290.

[140] Saints Qualifications, p. 286.

[141] Saints Qualifications, p. 291.

[142] Saints Qualifications, p. 292.

[143] Saints Qualifications, p. 293.

[144] Saints Qualifications, p. 294.

[145] Saints Qualifications, p. 294.

[146] Saints Qualifications, p. 295.

[147] Saints Qualifications, p. 296.

[148] Saints Qualifications, pp. 296-297.

[149] Saints Qualifications, p. 297.

[150] Saints Qualifications, p. 299.

[151] Saints Qualifications, p. 299.

[152] Saints Qualifications, pp. 300-301.

[153] Saints Qualifications, p. 302.

[154] Miller, The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century, p. 375.

[155] John von Rohr states that "this emphasis is not limited to Preston alone. One will also find it in Ball, Bayne, Harris, Pemble and Sibbes." See "Covenant and Assurance in Early English Puritanism, Church History, XXXIV (June, 1965), p. 199.

[156] Saints Qualifications, p. 302.

[157] Saints Qualifications, p. 318.

[158] Saints Qualifications, pp. 318-319.

[159] Saints Qualifications, p. 319.

[160] Saints Qualifications, pp. 319-320.

[161] Saints Qualifications, p. 320.

[162] Saints Qualifications, p. 320.

[163] Saints Qualifications, p. 321.

[164] Saints Qualifications, p. 321.

[165] The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love, p. 21.

[166] The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love, p. 21.

[167] The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love, p. 21.

[168] The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love, p. 21.

[169] The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love, p. 21.

[170] The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love, p. 22.

[171] The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love, p. 22.

[172] The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love, p. 22.

[173] The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love, p. 23.

[174] Saints Qualifications, p. 355.

[175] Saints Qualifications, p. 355.

[176] Saints Qualifications, p. 357.

[177] Saints Qualifications, p. 357.

[178] Saints Qualifications, p. 361.

[179] Saints Qualifications, p. 362.

[180] Saints Qualifications, p. 263.

[181] Saints Qualifications, p. 264.

[182] Saints Qualifications, pp. 264-265.

[183] Saints Qualifications, p. 267.

[184] John von Rohr, p. 197.

[185] Saints Qualifications, p. 486.

[186] Saints Qualifications, p. 487.

[187] The New Covenant, p. 182.

[188] The New Covenant, p. 183.

[189] The New Covenant, pp. 183-184.

[190] The New Covenant, pp. 184-185.

[191] The New Covenant, pp. 181-190.

[192] The New Covenant, p. 195.

[193] The New Covenant, p. 195.

[194] The New Covenant, p. 200.

[195] The New Covenant, p. 203.

[196] *The New Covenant*, p. 210.

[197] *The New Covenant*, pp. 210-211.

[198] *Life Eternal*, Part II, pp. 111-112.

[199] *The New Covenant*, pp. 211-212.

[200] *The New Covenant*, p. 212.

[201] *The New Covenant*, p. 214.

[202] *The New Covenant*, p. 214.

[203] *The New Covenant*, p. 214.

[204] *The New Covenant*, pp. 214-215.

[205] *The New Covenant*, p. 216.

[206] *The New Covenant*, p. 217.

[207] *The New Covenant*, p. 218.

[208] *The New Covenant*, p. 218.

[209] *The New Covenant*, p. 219.

[210] *The New Covenant*, p. 219.

[211] *The New Covenant*, p. 222.

[212] *The New Covenant*, p. 222.

[213] *The New Covenant*, p. 228.

[214] *The New Covenant*, p. 232.

[215] *The New Covenant*, p. 233.

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[216] The New Covenant, p. 239.

[217] The New Covenant, pp. 240-241.

[218] The New Covenant, p. 242.

[219] The New Covenant, p. 243.

[220] The New Covenant, pp. 249-250.

[221] The New Covenant, p. 277.

[222] The New Covenant, p. 281.

[223] The New Covenant, pp. 287-288.

[224] The New Covenant, p. 295.

[225] The New Covenant, p. 299.

[226] The New Covenant, p. 310.

[227] Thus this writer disagrees with the analysis of John von Rohr: "Because Christian men hopefully live in a covenant relation with God, realizing the conditions of faith and repentance, and receiving the correlate promises, the search for assurance turned largely on internal evidences of this relation and on conviction of God's faithfulness as one bound to respect his covenant commitments." (p. 202) Assurance certainly was gained through an awareness of God's faithfulness; but this awareness does little to solve the basic insecurity of the believer whose experience of faith might be "counterfeit." Those whom God elects for salvation will be obedient, by virtue of the Spirit of Christ at work in him. Therefore, external evidences, i.e., the obedient life, became very important in the quest for assurance.

[228] The New Covenant, p. 458.

[229] The New Covenant, p. 458.

[230] The New Covenant, pp. 458-459.

[231] The New Covenant, p. 459.

[232] The New Covenant, p. 467.

[233] The New Covenant, p. 460.

[234] The New Covenant, p. 460.

[235] The New Covenant, p. 460.

[236] The New Covenant, p. 460.

[237] The New Covenant, p. 461.

[238] The New Covenant, p. 464.

[239] The New Covenant, p. 464.

[240] The New Covenant, p. 466.

[241] The New Covenant, p. 468.

[242] The New Covenant, pp. 473-474.

[243] The New Covenant, p. 482.

[244] The New Covenant, p. 485.

[245] The New Covenant, p. 485.

[246] The New Covenant, p. 486.

[247] The New Covenant, p. 486.

[248] Saints Qualifications, p. 392.

[249] The New Covenant, p. 250.

[250] The New Covenant, p. 253.

[251] The New Covenant, p. 255.

[252] Saints Qualifications, p. 379.

[253] Saints Qualifications, p. 397.

[254] The New Covenant, p. 391.

[255] The New Covenant, p. 415.

[256] The New Covenant, pp. 400-401.

[257] The New Covenant, p. 421.

[258] The New Covenant, p. 402.

[259] The New Covenant, p. 402.

[260] The New Covenant, pp. 419-420.

[261] The New Covenant, p. 420.

[262] The New Covenant, pp. 391-392.

[263] The New Covenant, p. 406.

[264] The New Covenant, p. 431.

[265] Saints Qualifications, p. 329.

[266] Saints Qualifications, p. 329.

[267] Saints Qualifications, p. 329.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

I. Comparison of Covenant Theology and Ethics in the Thought of Calvin and Preston

It will be helpful to begin this concluding chapter with a comparison of the essential points in the covenant theology and ethics of Calvin and Preston. In the discussion to follow, the reader should recall that the basic hypothesis underlying this study is that the similarities far outweigh the dissimilarities in the covenant theology of the two figures.

The first area of consideration has to do with the priority given to the covenant idea. In the first chapter mention was made of W. Adams Brown's distinction between the covenant idea and covenant theology. According to Brown, "the covenant idea is common Christian property," while "covenant theology describes a special type of Christian thought which gives this idea central importance . . . and uses it as the organizing principle of the entire theological system."[1] There is no question but that Preston's thought fits squarely into the tradition of covenant theology in the Reformed movement, since he seeks to employ the covenant concept as the controlling principle in his theological system, in a manner that has been paralleled in Perkins, Ames, Thomas Hooker, and other Puritans of the seventeenth century. With Calvin, the situation is different. This study of Calvin's covenant theology has been undertaken with the awareness, as expressed by Hermann Bauke, that the key to the understanding of Calvin "cannot consist of any one doctrine from which everything else could be derived."[2] Thus any attempt to demonstrate that Calvin's theology can be deduced from his anthropology, Christology, or ontology is bound to fail. Nevertheless, the attempt has been made to clarify the important place that the covenant idea holds in Calvin's theological system.

We have seen the importance that Calvin gives to the covenant concept in regard to his understanding of salvation history, and in regard to Christian ethics. Concerning the first point, we observed in the second chapter that Calvin conceives the history of salvation to be identical with the history of the covenant of grace. God's redeeming relationship to man has been a covenantal relationship, in which God freely and without concern for human merit has offered to restore some men to the necessary condition whereby they might be related to God from whom they have fallen. In the history of this relationship, the one covenant of grace has been renewed on various occasions, and through various individuals: Moses, David, Christ. There has never occurred a change in substance in the covenant, although the

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clarity and effectiveness of the new covenant inaugurated by Christ exceeds that of the old covenant made with Abraham. Thus, Calvin's theology of history cannot be understood without thorough research into his theology of the covenant. The chief focus in this theology of history is on the Abrahamic covenant. At that point in history, when God spoke the covenantal Word to Abraham, salvation history began, and the entire history of the covenant of grace flows out of the Abrahamic event. The Abrahamic covenant becomes a tremendously important event in salvation history for even the death and resurrection of Christ, whereby the new covenant was established, was the outcome and fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham. This has the effect of upgrading the old covenant, and thereby Hebraic notions and concepts come to play an important part in Calvin's theology.

In regard to Calvin's understanding of the relationship between the covenant and the history of salvation, Preston is in agreement. Preston, like Calvin, sees the history of salvation beginning with the Abrahamic covenant, and its continuing history is simply the aftermath of the original covenantal act on God's part. Like Calvin, Preston incorporates Hebraic motifs into his theology. In their mutual understanding of history, the important difference, as will be discussed shortly, is Preston's attempt to utilize the covenant concept to describe man's relationship

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to God before Abraham. Hence for Preston the covenantal relationship between God and man was begun the moment God created Adam. But aside from Preston's employment of the concept of the covenant of works, the interpretations of salvation history in these two theologians appear to be very similar.

In regard to ethics, this dissertation has attempted to demonstrate that the covenant concept provides the theological basis for the kind of ethic that is developed by Preston and Calvin. Inasmuch as the covenant concept functions to describe not only the gracious activity of the forgiving God, but also the responsibilities of one who is adopted into the covenant, it is impossible to understand adequately the ethics of Calvin and Preston without reference to their covenant theology.

The importance of the covenant concept for other aspects of the thought of Calvin and Preston could probably be found. Additional research, for instance, could no doubt demonstrate, in regard to Calvin, the importance of the covenant idea for Christology. Since Christ is considered to be the mediator of the covenant of grace, a Christology that focuses on the heavenly Christ seems to be the necessary outcome. A study that sought to use covenant theology for understanding Calvin's position on the relationship between the humanity and divinity of Christ would prove helpful.[3]

As a result of this investigation into the theologies of Calvin and Preston, it is possible to conclude that the covenant idea is of extreme importance for both men. However, it is important to acknowledge the fact that one cannot refer to Calvin as a "covenant theologian," if one uses this phrase as a description of those theological systems in which the covenant motif has become the controlling principle. Preston, unlike Calvin, relates all aspects of theology to the covenant motif. Nevertheless, in Calvin as well as in Preston, the covenant idea is important, and functions as the theoretical foundation for their theologies of history, and more important for this study, as the theological basis for their ethics.

The second area of consideration concerns the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. The manner in which Calvin and Preston handle this relationship depends on the importance they grant to the idea of the one covenant of grace in the history of salvation. Both men attempt to find unity between the old and new covenants, thus bringing together Hebrew and Christian. Calvin writes that "the covenant made with all the patriarchs is so much like ours in substance and reality that the two are actually the same."[4] Preston states: "The Covenant of Grace is two-fold, it is either the Old Testament or the New; they both agree

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in substance, they differ only in the manner of ministration."[5] The old covenant, like the new covenant, was based on grace and focused on the hope of immortality. God does not act inconsistently, therefore the covenant of grace has not changed since it was introduced to Abraham. The differences center in the method of granting the covenant, rather than in its substance.

In order to better understand the differences and similarities between Calvin and Preston, it is appropriate to turn to their understanding of the ways in which the ministration of the old covenant differs from the new. The reader will recall that according to Calvin, the differences are (1) spiritual truth was conveyed in the old covenant through images and shadows; (2) the old covenant was external and literal, while the new is internal and spiritual; (3) the old covenant results in bondage, while the new results in freedom; (4) the old covenant was directed to one nation, while the new has reference to all nations; (5) the old covenant includes earthly benefits in addition to spiritual benefits. Preston lists four of the same differences: (1) the old covenant was restricted to images and shadows, (2) the new covenant is internal and spiritual, allowing for greater knowledge; (3) the old covenant was weak and unprofitable, the new covenant is much stronger; (4) the new covenant is more extensive than the old, since it applies to all nations. Preston does not include the fifth difference that Calvin notes, that the earthly benefits mentioned in the old covenant are not included in the new. One may not want to attach too much importance to this departure from Calvin, yet it might be possible to relate this omission to Preston's understanding of the third benefit associated with the covenant, that God promises to "provide all things that are necessary." Whereas Calvin seems to restrict the covenantal promises to faith and regeneration, thereby making possible salvation, Preston argues that "it is likewise a part of his Covenant, when a man wants any outward comfort, any outward help, and blessings or deliverance, he may go to Christ . . . and beseech him to grant it unto him: for it is part of the Covenant."[6] A further study of Preston might lead to a recognition that earthly, external benefits come to the covenant member. If this is the case, and parallel emphasis could be found in other covenant theologians, then a connection could be made between the external benefits that come to the covenant member, and the external, material benefits that would come to an entire nation that covenants with God. The social covenant of the Puritans, as seen most clearly in its New England development, focused on the idea that obedience to God brought prosperity, while disobedience resulted in war, famine, disease.[7] Extraordinary external

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benefits would occur to the people of Massachusetts Bay if they fulfilled their covenant responsibilities as a people. The background for this idea could very well be found in the early Puritan desire to push the unity between the old and new covenants one step closer than Calvin was willing to do: God promises not only faith and regeneration, but also to supply all outward things that are necessary for the individual. Thus, Preston's departure from Calvin on this point might be significant in understanding later Puritan belief that one's (or a nation's) status in the world could signify the kind of relationship that existed between that individual (or a nation) and God.

However, if this position taken by Preston involves an attempt to bring the Old and New Testaments together in a more unified way than Calvin was willing, one must be aware of an opposite tendency in Preston, in that he adds a further difference between the two covenants. Unlike Calvin, Preston fails to develop Calvin's notion that the Mediator of the old covenant was Christ. While the covenant of grace began with Abraham, Preston writes, as was noted earlier:

> Moses was the Mediator of the Old Testament, that is, it was he that declared it, it was he again that was the executioner of it; but we have a high Priest [who] is the Mediator of a better Covenant; that is, now Christ is the Mediator of the Covenant; it is he that declares the Covenant . . . and it is he that by the intervention of a certain compact, of certain articles

> of agreement, hath gone between them, as it were, and hath undertaken for both sides . . . God's part . . . and our part.[8]

The very strong emphasis of Calvin on the pre-incarnational work of Christ in mediating the old covenant in its various renewals is missing in Preston. The old covenant is still a covenant of grace, and the Hebrew faithful lived by faith, but Preston does not develop the notion of the work of the heavenly, pre-incarnational Christ in mediating the old covenant. By confining the work of Christ to the new covenant, Preston was pointing out a significant difference between the Old and New Testaments.

Thus, one is left with the position that, in comparison with Calvin, Preston on the one hand sees a closer unity than Calvin in regard to the continuation of external benefits in the new covenant, while, on the other hand, he sees greater disparity than Calvin does in regard to the mediation of the two covenants.

But these differences should not deflect from the kind of agreement that has been found between Preston and Calvin concerning the unity of the old and new covenants. For both men, the substance of the covenant of grace does not change in its long history. The differences between the Old and New Testaments involve matters of clarity, extensiveness, and knowledge; the promise of salvation does not change in the various renewals of the covenant.

One of the consequences of this unity between the old and new covenants, is that law and grace are brought together by Calvin and Preston in an extraordinary way in the history of Christian thought. Grace was the substance of the old covenant; law is continued in the new covenant. The old covenant saint who experienced the grace of God lived by faith in the covenantal promise of salvation, just as does the new covenant believer. In the same manner in which the law of the old covenant provided the standards of obedience for the Hebrew, so the same law functions in an identical way for the Christian. Through the employment of the pastoral function of the law, Hebraic motifs become very important in the theologies of Calvin and Preston.

A third major area of consideration concerns Calvin and Preston's understanding of the relationship between covenant theology and election. For both men, the decrees of God concerning the salvation or damnation of every individual come to fruition through one's relationship to the covenant of grace. According to Calvin, all members within the covenant have been the beneficiaries of God's general election. Thus, all the Hebrews during the old covenant era, and all Christians who belong to the church during the new covenant era, have been the recipients of God's general election. But within this group, there are some individuals who experience the regenerating power of Christ, and thus

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are the beneficiaries of God's particular election. Only this latter group will obtain salvation. Entrance into the covenant of grace through circumcision or baptism does not guarantee salvation. Such individuals receive a lower working of the Spirit, and are circumcised or baptized in the expectation of later faith and repentance. These individuals, like the beneficiaries of God's particular election, are obligated to live according to covenantal law. Preston supports Calvin's position, with the exception that he refers to the general elect as being members of a "conditional covenant," while the particular elect are members of an "absolute and peculiar covenant." But both types are contained within the covenant of grace. The difference between the conditional and peculiar covenants is that in the latter God has promised to instill faith and regeneration, thereby making salvation a reality. Through these schemes, every individual falls into one of three groups: those outside the covenant of grace, those who are the beneficiaries of God's general but not particular election, and those who are members not only of the conditional or general covenant, but also the peculiar and absolute covenant. Those individuals who belong to the second group are in a more favorable position than those outside the covenant of grace, but unless they experience the regenerative power of Christ, they too will be among the damned.

A fourth area of consideration concerns the handling of the doctrine of justification. Both Preston and Calvin maintain that entrance into the peculiar covenant of grace can be obtained only through faith. Calvin's thought is in agreement with Preston when the latter states that there have been only two possible ways by which salvation could be obtained: "Either by something we do ourselves, some actions that we ourselves have wrought, or else it must be merely by faith."[9] The moral law of the Old Testament, in its pedagogical function, teaches that no one can obtain salvation through works; therefore one can be justified by faith alone. Faith itself is not a human work; it is totally a gift of God. Through the Holy Spirit, God instills faith into the heart of the believer. If the experience of faith is genuine, obedience to the will of God will follow.

Furthermore, there is agreement between Preston and Calvin in regard to the concept of variation in the knowledge of faith. Preston argues that there is variation (1) in relation to the history of salvation, (2) in the extent to which one fully comprehends the truth that Christ is given to the believer, and (3) in regard to assurance. A close examination of Calvin's thought results in the recognition that these motifs are equally important to Calvin. In regard to the first point, Calvin is very clear that the history of salvation involves an increase in the knowledge of faith. Faith is the work of the Holy Spirit, and since the beginning of the new covenant era, the work of the Spirit has been more extensive, qualitatively as well as quantitatively. The New Testament man has a distinct advantage over the Old Testament man, in that the knowledge of God gained through his faith is much greater than that knowledge which was given to the Hebrew saint. In regard to the second point, the life of every saint involves a movement from ignorance to increasingly more perceptive knowledge. Edward Dowey points out that one notion that is related to Calvin's epistemology is

> Calvin's frequently reiterated idea that the believer progresses constantly in the knowledge of faith. There must be a 'continual growth, both in knowledge and in conformity to the image of God.'[10]

Calvin states:

> When first even the least drop of faith is instilled in our minds, we begin to contemplate God's face, peaceful and calm and gracious toward us. We see him afar off, but so clearly as to know we are not at all deceived. Then, the more we advance as we ought continually to advance, with steady progress, as it were, the nearer and thus surer sight of him we obtain; and by the very continuance he is made even more familiar to us. So we see that the mind, illumined by the knowledge of God, is at first wrapped up in much ignorance, which is gradually dispelled.[11]

This understanding of variation in the knowledge of faith is related to Calvin's use of the term "implicit faith." While disagreeing with the Catholic employment of this term, Calvin contends that this term can be used to refer to that kind of faith which is true faith but which is still wrapped in "ignorance" and "darkness" rather than "full enlightenment."[12] Calvin states that "unbelief is, in all men, always mixed with faith," but the goal of the Christian life is to grow in the depth of faith so that ignorance will gradually decline and full knowledge emerge.[13] Finally, in regard to Preston's notion that there is variation concerning the assurance of faith, it has been observed that Calvin recognizes that not all believers have equal assurance of genuine faith and salvation.

> For unbelief is so deeply rooted in our hearts, and we are so inclined to it, that not without hard struggle is each one able to persuade himself of what all confess with the mouth: namely, that God is faithful.[14]

The goal is to obtain "sure confidence in divine benevolence and salvation," but this can only be accomplished after a "hard struggle."

Just as Preston and Calvin agree on the subject of variation in the knowledge of faith, so they agree on the vital importance of the doctrine of justification by faith alone. The reader will recall the reasons given by Preston for why justification must occur by faith alone: (1) the history of man demonstrates that salvation through works is impossible; (2) salvation is sure only if it rests on the

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grace of God; (3) if justification occurred through the law, then the offer of salvation would be limited to the Jews; (4) it must be by faith, otherwise man would boast in himself. Thus, entrance into the peculiar covenant of grace comes only through faith, which is the gift of God.

Yet, one might argue that a theological system that includes the motif of preparation for salvation, however carefully that motif is guarded, tends to lessen the notion that faith alone is sufficient for obtaining salvation. This argument would maintain that in granting man some natural ability to prepare for the moment of faith, such a theological system is moving in the direction of arguing that good works are also involved in obtaining justification. It must be recognized that Preston denies that prayer or holy endeavors in the unregenerate result in God's justifying the individual. Yet they do result in God becoming favorable toward the individual, so that the Holy Spirit will instill faith, thereby making justification possible. But if this argument is correct, Preston is unaware that he is in any way compromising the Reformation understanding of justification by faith alone. Thus, the issue must be examined more carefully. This argument tends to lose some of its force if one remembers that the foundation of Preston's understanding of preparation is the covenant concept. He who is involved in preparation has already experienced,

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in a limited way, the grace of God. He was baptized into the church, and is a member of the general covenant. Furthermore, preparation depends on the pedagogical use of the law, for only in that way can humiliation, which is the foundation of preparation, occur. Likewise, preparation occurs only as the individual hears the preached word, the external call of God. Thus one cannot argue that Preston teaches that human ability is by itself responsible for divine favor being shown to the individual. Indeed, Pettit points out that the most basic position that one can find in Preston's thought in regard to this issue, is that all preparation that results in justification and regeneration is in some sense the work of the Spirit, while that preparation which results in ineffectual and counterfeit faith is done without the aid of the Spirit.[15] Preparation plays an important role in the justifying process, yet that work is essentially ascribed to the grace of God.

Thus, on the one hand, the differences between Preston and Calvin in regard to the doctrine of justification by faith do not seem very significant. At times the two theologians are in all essential matters in agreement. On the other hand, differences do become evident in those sermons where insufficient acknowledgement is given to the role of divine power in allowing the covenant member to prepare for salvation. At times it seems as if Preston's concern for instilling obedience in his parishoners gains the upper hand, with the resulting loss of focus on Calvin's doctrine that the human will is totally impotent without the grace of God. Thus, there is some confusion in Preston's thought concerning the role of God and the role of man in the process of preparation for salvation. It therefore appears to be true that the concern for preparation has a tendency to qualify Calvin's understanding of the justification process, in that there is declining interest displayed in divine initiative which makes possible justifying faith. Instead, human responsibility takes on increasing importance. It must also be remembered that this tendency in Preston becomes very significant in later Puritan theologians who focus more and more on the process of preparation, and the role of man in that process.

A fifth area of consideration concerns the manner in which Calvin and Preston derive an ethic of obligation from their covenant theology. The notion that there has been only one covenant in the history of salvation has a significant effect on the kind of ethic that Preston and Calvin develop. This notion means that law and gospel are brought together; the old covenant man was justified by faith, the new covenant man is obligated to keep the moral law. Thus, it can be argued that in Preston's theology, as in Calvin's theology, the Christian is Hebraized and the

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Hebrew Christianized. A significant type of synthesis between law and grace has thus taken place.

While both Calvin and Preston emphasize that the extension of the covenant to man occurred only through the gracious activity of God, the covenant is mutual, and conditionality is included. Thus, Preston writes:

> For so you promised, there is a stipulation, an engagement, remember that you keep covenant, and condition with him (for it is reciprocal): for all covenants must be mutual, they must be between two parties, and remember, that thou put the seal to it, that thou renew with God the covenant, that thou hast made to walk before him perfectly.[16]

And Calvin writes:

> Let us consider the contents or substances of this doctrine which we have touched, namely that our Lord, having sought us out, gives himself to us, and that in such a way that is bound, as it were, by solemn covenant, so that we may freely come to him, and require him to perform his promises. But . . . let us also understand on what condition it is that he is so bound to us. For when we have been once bound after that fashion, if we make little reckoning of so inestimable a benefit or if we regret it and disdain it, do we think that such contempt of ours shall remain unpunished?[17]

For both Calvin and Preston, the full covenantal requirement involves faith followed by obedience. Obedience is required because holiness is the bond of unity between God and man. To attain salvation, this bond must exist; hence, the pastoral function of the law becomes very important, permitting the believer to mold his life, through the regenerating power of the Spirit, according to the will of God. Both the general elect and the particular elect are obligated to live according to covenant law, by virtue of being members of the covenant. But only he who is a member of the particular elect will actually succeed in this obligation, for only he has access to the regenerating Spirit who makes possible the fulfillment of the obligation.

The ethic that emerges in Calvin and Preston is a scriptural ethic, focusing on the moral law of the Old Testament. Both men are convinced that scripture provides a pattern for the conduct of life. The ethic is a progressive ethic, in that progress in obedient living is expected of the covenant member. This progressive element achieves clearest expression in Preston's notion that the Christian life is like a "journey." When the journey is completed, the bond of unity between man and God, which consists of holiness, allows the individual to pass into heavenly immortality. The ethic stresses self-denial; man is not his own master, and therefore his life is to be spent in service to God. The ethic concentrates on the sincerity of the believer's heart; without sincerity the moral law cannot be maintained. Preston lists the characteristics of the sincere individual: he is one who has purity of heart, single-mindedness, integrity, uprightness, and courage to fight evil. Yet the ethic is a rule ethic, concentrating on the moral prescriptions of the

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covenant.[18] But only he who is sincere will be able to keep the rules. Finally, it was noted that the foundation of all morality is appropriate fear of God since, according to Calvin, fear "is the surest shield for resisting all temptations, and a firm support to uphold our minds from wavering in seasons of danger."[19] Fear functions to create the proper frame of mind whereby obedience will be maintained. Yet fear can remain appropriate only because God has given the believer the hope of immortality.

A final area of consideration concerns the important role granted by Calvin and Preston to ethical behavior in ascertaining assurance of salvation. It has been noted that the problem of assurance in the thought of Calvin and Preston must be located, on the one hand, in their doctrine of election, and on the other hand, in the denial of free will. One can know that the perseverance of the elect is sure; the problem emerges when one seeks to ascertain whether he is a member of the particular elect, for unless God has decreed his salvation, there is nothing that he can do to earn blessed immortality. These decrees are ultimately known only to God, otherwise, as Preston acknowledges, such knowledge would lead to a lack of endeavors and to "discouragement." Covenant theology functions to make sure that such discouragement will not set in, while at the same time providing the means by which a measure of assurance can be obtained.

Membership in the covenant of grace entails faith and obedience; obedience without faith is superficial and bound to fail; faith without obedience is "counterfeit."

The problem of assurance emerges when Calvin and Preston take very seriously the New Testament advice that many are called, but few are chosen. Not all those who belong to the covenant of grace, who have been baptized into the church, are among the elect. The hypocrite may claim to have the experience of faith, but he is deceived, and his outward behavior will demonstrate that deception. Thus, Calvin states:

> For though only those predestined to salvation receive the light of faith and truly feel the power of the gospel, yet experience shows that the reprobate are sometimes affected by almost the same feeling as the elect, so that even in their own judgment they do not in any way differ from the elect.[20]

Hence, the individual must determine whether he is within the absolute and peculiar covenant of grace, or whether he is a hypocrite. The doctrines of predestination and perseverance do provide some assurance: the elect will not fall. To determine if one is elected to salvation, one must examine his status within the covenant: have the covenantal requirements of faith and obedience been fulfilled? Consistency in faith and ensuing obedience thereby becomes the criterion for gaining assurance of salvation. Both Calvin and Preston state that the reprobate does enjoy something of the experience of faith, but that experience has not resulted in the forgiveness of sin. Furthermore, the motif that victory lies in the future, after one's pilgrimage has been completed, means that the experience of faith is separated from the most important rewards that can come from that experience. Christ has accomplished salvation, but one lives under the suspenseful expectation that it has been accomplished for him; the full benefits can only be known once the pilgrimage is completed. In the last analysis, the practice of scriptural morality takes on importance in determining for oneself one's covenantal status, because faith alone cannot grant this assurance. The hypocrite may think he has faith, but he will stumble when it comes to the practice of scriptural morality. His heart is not sincere, and therefore eventually sin will gain the upper hand. Calvin's solution to the problem can be found in the second chapter of John: "If they had been of us, they would not have gone out from us"; furthermore the same gospel states: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples." Calvin, like Preston, is clear that continuing in the word involves both faith and obedience. If one is a member of the particular elect, he will be obedient, by virtue of the grace of God. Holiness demonstrates that Justification has occurred, that one's sins have been forgiven, and that, therefore, one has been elected to salvation. Morality becomes proof of the Holy Spirit. Good works demonstrate that God has through his decrees elected that individual to salvation. Both Preston and Calvin admit that the individual who is the beneficiary of God's particular election will continue to sin; but, as Preston states, that individual will get ground of sin, will not fall back to the allowance of sin, will not have his soul overcome by sin, and will not allow any sin to become repetitive. Consistency in ethical behavior thereby becomes the final criterion in gaining assurance of salvation. This is why Preston states: "If thou be one that art able to overcome temptations, and unruly affections, and sinful lust, thou mayest conclude, it is true testimony that thou are not deceived. . . ."[21]

Thus, on the basis of the foregoing discussion, the following conclusions have been reached in regard to the basic areas of consideration that have been studied: (1) While Calvin cannot correctly be considered a covenant theologian, in that the covenant motif does not determine every area of his theology, he does, like Preston, grant tremendous importance to the motif, particularly in regard to his understanding of history and ethics. (2) Both Calvin and Preston stress the unity of the Old and New Testaments, with the consequence that law and grace are brought together in a unique way in the history of Christian theology. (3) In the thought of both men there is a close correlation between covenant theology and the doctrine of election: the decrees of God come to fruition through one's relationship to the covenant of grace. (4) Both men agree on the vital importance of the doctrine of justification by faith alone, although Preston seems to soften this notion through his employment of the concept of preparation. (5) Both Calvin and Preston derive an ethic of obligation from their covenant theology, in that the full covenantal requirement is faith followed by obedience. Likewise, both theologians acknowledge that only the particular elect will succeed in this obligation. (6) In the theology of Calvin and Preston, assurance of salvation emerges as a serious problem, and both men are led to acknowledge the importance that the practice of scriptural morality can have for granting this assurance.

Therefore, in regard to the basic emphases of their covenant theology and ethics, Preston and Calvin are in basic agreement. However, we have observed that there are several important shifts that take place in Preston's thought, and this study would be incomplete without a careful analysis of the exact manner in which Preston departs from Calvin's theology.

II. Points of Departure in Preston

The first important difference between Calvin and Preston that one can point to is Preston's conception of the covenant of works. It will be recalled that Preston maintains that the covenant of works began the moment when God created Adam. Adam was to live by the moral law, which God implanted in Adam's heart, and thereby he would be rewarded with eternal life. Adam's responsibility was thus total obedience to God. When Adam fell into sin, through disobedience, the covenant of works became obsolete, although it still functions in two ways: the natural law by which Adam was to live received written formulation during the Mosaic era, and, as we have noted, this law serves as a pedagogical device whereby the individual will recognize his need for grace, and as a summary of those obligations which are to be fulfilled by the member of the covenant of grace.

In the last chapter it was mentioned that to a certain extent the motif of the covenant of works involves a conceptualizing of the most primary form of obligation that Calvin discusses: man is to be obedient and holy by virtue of the fact that God is holy, and man has been created by God and is responsible to him. In this sense it seems as if Preston's discussion of the covenant of works does not really involve a significant difference from

Calvin's thought. Thus, for instance, one can point to Calvin's statement: "Adam was denied the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to test his obedience and prove that he was willingly under God's command."[22] Likewise, Calvin can write that "disobedience was the beginning of the Fall."[23] But a closer examination of Calvin's position indicates that Adam's problem began not with disobedience, as the theory of the covenant of works indicates, but with a decline in faith. Thus, after discussing the disobedience of Adam, Calvin remarks that "unfaithfulness . . . was the root of the Fall . . . thereafter ambition and pride, together with ungratefulness, arose, because Adam by seeking more than was granted him shamefully spurned God's great bounty, which had been lavished upon him . . . faithlessness opened the door to ambition, and ambition was indeed the mother of obstinate disobedience."[24] Holmes Rolston III thus points out that the concept of the covenant of works is fundamentally at odds with Calvin's understanding of the primary relationship between God and Adam. According to Rolson:

> the idea for this covenant was drawn from the Mosaic law. Removed from its Old Testament setting, the promise of life on condition of obedience has been pushed back to creation and made the basic relationship between God and man.[25]

Rolston, therefore, sees this concept of the covenant as emphasizing not a relationship between God and man of grace,

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but of works. Adam was to live by faith, argues Calvin, and out of that faith he would remain obedient.

> It is obedience to the law, but not of the law, it is an obedience of faith. It flows from faith, is born of love and gratitude, and keeps the law in praise of a beneficient and paternal God.[26]

Likewise, Rolston states that Calvin conceived of Adam's obedience as a condition of his continuing to receive grace, but "life is given only as, but not because, man obeys."[27] Therefore, Rolston sees the Puritan departure from Calvin in regard to the covenant of works as a tendency to emphasize the ability and merit of man, since it sees the primary relationship between God and man as being a relationship stressing man's obedience to God, without sufficient focus on the necessity of grace and faith to so live. Since "the duty of primal man and of man generically is not different in essence from that of the elect in the Church," the Puritan doctrine of the covenant of works results in a kind of legalism that is not true to the thought of Calvin.[28] However, Rolston recognizes that

> it would be misleading to maintain that Calvin has no thought of law in his concept of the original relation between God and man. On the contrary, law has a vital place in God's ordering of his world; order can be maintained only as man is obedient to divine law. But it would be inaccurate to set forth Calvin's concept principally along these lines. The principal thing in the primal order, the principle of it, is God's grace. It would be similarly inaccurate to maintain that [Puritan] covenant theology has

> no thought of grace in its concept of the primal legal covenant.[29]

Yet, according to Rolston, the change in emphasis between Calvin and the Calvinists is a significant one: Calvin focused on the grace of God making possible obedience to the law, while the Calvinists stressed obedience which makes possible the continuation of grace.

While the general thrust of these arguments by Rolston must be accepted, it is important to point out that, on the basis of this investigation into his covenant theology, Preston does seek to maintain that faith and obedience are possible only through the gracious activity of God whereby the Holy Spirit instills faith and prompts obedience. But still, as will be noted shortly, the contractual nature of the covenant in Preston does seem more pronounced than in Calvin, and the obligation of the covenant member according to Preston is thought of in terms where notions of obedience have entered into the picture without the kind of recourse to God's grace that is so true with Calvin. If this kind of difference does exist between Calvin and Preston, then their understanding of the primal relationship between God and man would demonstrate the difference, and, as we have seen, the concept of the covenant of works does focus on the sin of man being disobedience, rather than looking deeper into the problem of faithlessness as Calvin has done.

Thus, the second major area of difference between

Calvin and Preston involves a heightening of contractual language employed by Preston in describing the covenantal relationship between God and man. According to this study of Preston, Perry Miller is correct when he writes that in the use of the word "covenant," Puritan theologians "understood just such a contract between two parties, signed and sworn to, and binding upon both."[30] We have noted that Preston refers to the covenant as a contract, a bond, an agreement, a compact, a mutual engagement. The frequency of this kind of language in Preston involves a departure from Calvin. The result is that mutuality and conditionality assume greater priority in Preston than in Calvin. Throughout his sermons, Preston uses the conditional language of the covenant to instill obedience in his listeners. Earlier in this dissertation it was argued that the same type of language is employed by Calvin; but it would be a misrepresentation of Preston's thought if one did not note that the priority of conditional language is more intense in Preston.

As a result of this tendency to stress conditionality, obedience achieves a place of priority in Preston's covenant theology with, in comparison to Calvin, less focus on faith as that which permits responsible Christian living. Again, it is a matter of emphasis, for certainly Preston is eager to follow in the footsteps of Calvin to argue that without the grace of God which makes possible faith, one's responsibility to the fulfillment of the law cannot be had. But, because of this emphasis, there is more of a tendency in Preston to think of the God-man relationship in terms of obedience. For instance, in discussing the necessity for obedience, Preston wishes to argue that zeal for the law turns away the wrath of God. Preston's attention is thus focused on obedience, rather than on faith which makes possible a zeal for the law. Calvin is more content to state that such an individual needs a deepening of faith, a re-invigoration of the soul, and from the renewal of faith proper obedience will result. Or, again, one can point to Preston's tendency to use the sacraments as the occasion for encouraging obedience, by reminding the people of their covenantal commitments. This tendency can be found in Calvin, but his primary emphasis is to use the sacraments as the occasion for the renewal of faith. The outcome of this tendency is a more pronounced legalism in Preston than in Calvin. One can see this in regard to a Preston statement quoted earlier: the way to find out whether one's heart is sincere and perfect is to consider "whether you walk so exactly that you have not only an eye to the main points of every commandment, but you observe the least point, that you find in every commandment. Except you do this, I say, your hearts are not perfect."[31] The characteristics of the sincere heart of the regenerate man are thought of more in terms of ethical conduct than faith. This is why spiritual adultery, which results in the breaking of the covenant for the individual who is the recipient of only God's general election, is primarily thought of in terms of disobedience, rather than faithlessness.

> Look narrowly to this, if there be any creature in the World, any pleasure, any profit, any matter of credit or honor or whatsoever the thing be, any delight, or Sport, or inclination, or lust, where with thy heart commits adultery, certainly thou has chosen another Husband, whatsoever thou pretendest.[32]

Spiritual adultery involves a change in affections, but Preston is more concerned with the ethical consequences of this change than he is in the initial problem: lack of faith. This is why Rolston believes that the way in which Puritans like Preston describe the primal relationship between God and man is indicative of their tendency to concentrate more on obedience than faith. This can clearly be seen in the differing ways of describing sin. Whereas Clavin sees the root of sin to be faithlessness, the Westminister Shorter Catechism, composed by Puritans, states that "sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God."[33] Sin is thus understood more in terms of lawlessness than faithlessness.

A third significant area of difference between Calvin and Preston occurs in the latter's notion of preparation for

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salvation, or at least, a notion that serves as a forerunner of the later doctrine. It was noted in the last chapter that the concept of preparation focused on a period of time between the conscience being troubled by sin to the moment when forgiveness of sins occurred. The soul becomes humbled by the light of scripture. The notion of preparation develops in Preston's theology from the distinction between the peculiar and the conditional covenant of grace. Preston exhorts his listeners to pray and engage in a life of obedience, in expectation that God will respond by granting faith, thereby allowing the individual to become a member of the peculiar covenant. Should the individual fail in this task, God is likely to send forth his decree of reprobation. Preston is eager to counter the notion that the doctrine of election will lead to "discouragement," hence, in the concept of preparation, a kind of compromise is taking place between a strict interpretation of election and the necessity to encourage obedience. Thus, it can be argued that this notion allows for an incorporation of some of the attitudes of the Arminians, without becoming an exponent of free will. This is why Preston pleads: "Labor to see yourself humbled, if ever you look to be saved," while still arguing that justification occurs only through faith which is the gift of the Holy Spirit.[34]

But one must be careful not to exaggerate this

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difference between Calvin and Preston. It has been already noted that Norman Pettit contends that Calvin differed from Tyndale, Zwingli, and Martyr by understanding conversion to involve a process over a period of time, rather than a sudden conversion, although the latter type of experience can and does occur. Thus, Calvin writes that "a pious desire of learning, humility and reverence should be accounted the commencement of faith, since it is from these elements that God begins to perfect faith in us by certain progressive steps."[35] Likewise, Calvin states that in conversion "God begins . . . by exciting in our hearts a desire, a love, and a study of righteousness, or (to speak more correctly) by turning, training, and guiding our hearts unto righteousness."[36] After studying this and similar statements by Calvin, Emerson remarks that "for Calvin as for the covenant theologians, regeneration is a gradual process."[37] T. H. L. Parker summarizes Calvin's position by saying that "there is . . . according to Calvin, a certain knowledge which precedes and begets faith; which is, indeed a praeparatio fidei."[38] On the other hand, Preston seems to make clear that the notion of preparation does not involve a doctrine of free will when he writes that if a man desired to enter into the covenant "the way is not . . . for a man to think with himself, this I ought to do, and I will set about it, I have made a Covenant, I have resolved with myself to do it, but the way is, to labour to get assurance of forgiveness, to labour to apprehend the Covenant of Grace."[39]

Thus, it is possible to conclude that the themes that Preston develops in regard to preparation for salvation can be found in Calvin, but that there is more concern demonstrated by Preston for the process by which conversion takes place. An explanation for this concern can be found in Preston's attempt to ward off discouragement brought on by the doctrine of election. If one could adequately understand the process of conversion, then sermons could focus on the specific stages by which conversion takes place, thereby letting the listener know how close he was to obtaining saving faith.

The notion of preparation in Preston's thought can be understood adequately only by reference to his desire to soften the doctrine of election. The Arminians claimed that without a doctrine of free will, man would cease to engage in obedient living. Preston was forced to respond to this challenge and in so doing the doctrine of election is relaxed to the point of granting to the individual the power to permit God to respond to the individual in a gracious manner. Preston's desire to make sure that the doctrine of election will not lead to discouragement and moral laxity results in, first of all, an emphasis that the decrees of

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God are secret, "and no man know it: therefore there is a door of hope opened to all, to stir them up to endeavor."[40] Since neither saint nor reprobate can know for sure God's will regarding the individual, one must maintain a positive attitude, which will be expressed in prayer and holy endeavors. But also, Preston's desire results in the position that the decree of reprobation is actualized during the lifetime of the individual, and as long as the individual is able to pray and seek God, the decree has not been finalized. This is why Preston writes that

> there is a double time . . . a time of the coming forth of this decree, and a time of preparing and trying while the door stands open: therefore take heed that that acceptable time do not pass away, lest thou be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.[41]

Preston thus wishes to argue that while God decrees the reprobation of some individuals from eternity, this decree is not actualized until a certain moment arrives in the lives of those individuals. Until that moment occurs, these individuals are allowed a time of "preparing and trying." Should their prayer and holy endeavors result in the gracious response of God, they will become members of the particular elect. In this case, Preston wishes to say, the decree itself has not changed: for that decree is based on the sinfulness of the individual. Rather, the individuals have changed, making possible the gracious attitude of God. This position is very different from the firm and uncompromising

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doctrine of election that one finds in Calvin:

> We call predestination God's eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or to death.[42]

Preston's logic is strained to the point of breaking. Preston is attempting to maintain the doctrine of election while seeking in every way possible to encourage his listeners to assume a life of obedience. A threat is included in Preston's sermons: should the individual not engage in a life of prayer and holy living, the original decree of reprobation is likely to become effective. This departure from Calvin's doctrine of election is significant, and leads to the conclusion that Preston is compromising with the Arminian challenge. While man lacks free will in regard to salvation, since the instilling of saving faith is a matter of divine initiative, man nevertheless appears to have sufficient will to prepare for the moment when the Holy Spirit instills faith. Preston's over-riding concern is to provide a rationale for obedience for all members of the covenant, whether belonging to the absolute or conditional covenant. The individual who lives up to his covenantal commitments will receive the regenerating power of Christ.

It is known, on the basis of the work of Miller and Pettit, that this concern for preparation leads in

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New England to a full-blown doctrine of preparation: "Do what you are able to do, put all your strength, and diligence unto it."[43] Such a notion is foreign to Preston. Thomas Hooker can be seen as one theologian who, theologically and chronologically, stands between Preston's notion of preparation and the later New England Arminian emphasis. Pettit writes that

> the preparatory phase was by far the most important single activity in Hooker's conception of conversion. Rarely did he preach to his covenant community without exhorting the unconverted to prepare for grace. Seldom did he turn to the regenerative process without initial concern for 'the heart prepared.'[44]

In both Preston and Hooker the notion of preparation is meant to guard against moral laxity. But in Hooker the concern for preparation takes on great importance, and the natural abilities of man are expanded. But the foundation for this theological position can be found in the kind of concern that Preston exhibits for the conversion process, a concern that originates in the desire to conquer discouragement and to stimulate holy endeavors.[45]

Thus the three primary differences that one finds between Calvin and Preston involve Preston's notion of the covenant of works, a heightening of contractual language in Preston which demonstrates a more pronounced concern for obedience, and a more active concern in Preston for the way in which the individual moves from unfaith to faith. To a great extent, these differences must be understood as a response to the Arminian challenge. Changes in covenant theology become necessary as a way of coping with discouragement and moral laxity, brought on by the doctrine of election and the corresponding doctrine of the impotency of human will.

III. Historical and Theological Explanations for the Differences in Covenant Theology and Ethics in Calvin and Preston

In light of the differences between Calvin and Preston, it will be helpful to explore several explanations for the more consistent concern for law and obedience that one finds in the latter theologian.

First, it can be argued that the historical background for this more consistent concern for man's lawlessness rather than faithlessness can be found in the type of thought developed by the Puritans of the sixteenth century. In fact, one might find it helpful to go back to the teachings of Wickliffe. According to Trinterud, early English reformers, such as William Tyndale, were indebted to Wickliffe "and to those better aspects of medieval English church life," for "their ideal of piety, their conception of repentance, and their view of Preaching."[46] In Wickliffe one finds an ethical emphasis, with great value being placed on the necessity of obedience. Wickliffe defined the church as the _congregation omnium predestinatorum_, a forerunner of later

Reformed church doctrine. Whether anyone belongs to this congregation can only be judged with probability by the kind of life he lives.[47]

While one can only speculate as to the most primitive origins of Puritan covenant theology, it is in William Tyndale that one finds a "whole-hearted and systematic adoption of the law-covenant scheme as the basis of his entire religious outlook."[48] According to Tyndale, scripture demonstrates that all of God's promises are conditional, and constitute a covenant entered into by persons at baptism in which God promises certain blessings to men on the condition that they keep his laws. Tyndale states:

> And thus repentance and faith begin at baptism and first professing the laws of God; and continues unto our lives end, and grow as we grow in the Spirit: for the perfecter we be the greater is our repentance, and the stronger our faith . . .[49]

Although man is justified by faith alone, the promises are given to us "on this condition and covenant on our part, that we hence forth love the law of God, to walk therein, and to do it, and fashion our lives thereafter."[50] The Roman church errs when it teaches that fallen man is able to keep the law by his own strength, and thereby secure the forgiveness of sin. It is God who brings the believer into covenant with him and it is Christ who gives man the grace to do the law. Yet at the same time, it is obedience that keeps the Christian in the favor of God:

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> And let us arm ourselves with this remembrance, that as Christ's works justify from sin, and set us in the favor of God, so our deeds, through working of the Spirit of God, help us to continue in the favor and the grace, into which Christ hath brought us; and that we can no longer continue in favour and grace, than our hearts are set to keep the law.[51]

Tyndale also states that obedience makes Christians "heirs of everlasting life," and that one is saved from damnation "through repentance toward the law."[52] According to Trinterud, "all strictly religious matters, public and private, all moral standards, public and private, all sense of ethical and religious obligation, are founded upon this sworn covenant of promise to God's law."[53] Thus, Tyndale strongly encouraged the ethical implications of the covenant. For instance, in the Prologue to the Five Books of Moses, Tyndale states that

> all the promise throughout the whole scripture do include a covenant: that is, God bindeth himself to fulfill that mercy unto thee only if thou wilt endeavor thyself to keep his laws.[54]

While Tyndale does acknowledge that it is God who allows the Christian to strive for perfection, one cannot overlook his latent Arminianism:

> He that hath a good heart towards the work of God, and a set purpose to fashion his deeds thereafter, and to garnish it with godly living, and to testify it to other, the same shall increase daily more and more in the grace of Christ.[55]

Thus, in Tyndale's theology, the concern for law and

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obedience predominates.

A similar position can be found in the writings of John Hooper. In A Declaration of the Ten Holy Commandments, Hooper argues that no covenant or "contract, peace alliance, or confederacy" can be established until both parties agree to certain conditions. The Ten Commandments are those conditions that man must accept and follow if there is to be "peace between God and man." If the law is kept God is "bound to aid and preserve man and at last to give him eternal bliss and everlasting felicity."[56] Yet, Hooper does acknowledge that this can only be accomplished through the grace of Christ. Hooper sought to encourage obedience while maintaining an Augustinian anthropology. But a latent Arminianism can be observed when he argues that diligence and obedience are required in order to make the promises of God effective.

This English Puritan background thus offers a possible explanation for the greater concern for law and obedience in Preston. But in comparison with Tyndale or Hooper, Preston certainly maintains the Reformation principle of justification by faith alone, and the belief that good works are only possible through the regenerating power of Christ. It could be that other Puritans of Preston's era are the true inheritors of the Tyndalian concern for law. Thus, for instance, Robert Harris, while writing against

Arminianism, can nevertheless state:

> Though it be not in the power of a man to do any gracious acts of himself, yet it is in his power to apply himself to the use of God's means, as to come to God's house, to set himself under the minister, to hear what is delivered to apply his understanding to what he hears, etc.[57]

Therefore, it seems possible to argue that the sixteenth-century Puritan background, which stressed law and obedience in a manner that was foreign to Calvin, continued to be influential in seventeenth-century Puritanism, and that Preston incorporates some of these tendencies into his covenant theology. Perhaps this is the reason why he sees the sin of Adam being disobedience rather than faithlessness, why contractual language is used extensively in the covenant formulation, why zeal for the law is capable of turning away the wrath of God, and why the sacraments are used more for the occasion of instilling obedience rather than for the renewal of faith.

A second historical explanation can be found in the seventeenth-century Arminian challenge to Puritanism. Preston and his colleagues were forced to take seriously the challenge presented by the proponents of free will. While Calvin's theology is worked out _vis a vis_ the Roman Catholic understanding of human will, which Calvin understood to be Pelagian in emphasis, the Puritans of Preston's era were forced to counter a doctrine of free will that had developed

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within the Reformed tradition.

Arminianism, as it was first formulated by the Dutch theologian, Jacobus Arminius, toward the end of the sixteenth century, rejected the notion of double predestination. In England, Anglican cleric Lancelot Andrews represents this tradition. John New writes:

> Andrews thought that attributing reprobation to a decree of God came perilously close to making God responsible for sin. God was benign and loving, and man was reprobated for his want of belief. An under-current of grace flowed in all men, and salvation was proffered to all if not conferred on all. That some missed their heaven-sent opportunity was not due to God's inexorable will but to human obstinacy. This may appear to release a trickle of free will in the form of an accepting or rejecting power in man.[58]

But this position should not be interpreted as a full-blown doctrine of free will. For, as New states, "Andrews allowed no power of choice whatsoever with respect to spiritual good, until grace had first removed the impediments and provided the strength for perseverance."[59]

While this strict form of Arminianism was debated in English ecclesiastical circles of the late sixteenth century, it was not until the second and third decades of the seventeenth century that the term "Arminianism," from the Puritan perspective, came to be associated with a Roman Catholic understanding of free will.[60] Anglican clergy who tended to lean in the Arminian direction came to be associated, in the Puritan mind, with the Dutch Arminians, who were denounced in 1618 by the Synod of Dort. Thus, in a Remonstrance of 1628 Commons observed that there was

> a daily growth and spreading of the faction of the Arminians, that being, as your Majesty well knows, a cunning way to bring in Popery, and the professors of this opinion [are] the common disturbers of Protestant churches and incendiaries in those states wherein they have gotten any head, being Protestants in show, but Jesuits in opinion . . . who, not withstanding, are much favored and advanced, not wanting friends even of the clergyman to your Majesty, namely Dr. Neale . . . and Dr. Laud . . . who are justly suspected to be unsound in their opinions that way.[61]

This Remonstrance was written the year Preston died, and although it would be two years before Laud would become Archbishop, Arminianism was becoming fashionable among the established clergy. In response to the rise of this theological position, orthodox Puritans were forced to give more and more consideration to the doctrines of predestination and denial of free will. Alan Simpson reports that

> by 1630, when a wit was asked by a puzzled inquirer what the Arminians held--Arminianism being the badge of the Laudian party--he was able to reply, 'All the best bishoprics and deaneries in England.'[62]

Thus, Preston's sermons were given at a time when the Arminian faction within the Church of England was claiming that orthodox Calvinism was not only unfair to the benevolent and merciful Father, but that its doctrines of double predestination and denial of free will will lead to paralysis of the will and resulting moral laxity.

As a result of the Arminian challenge, Preston and his colleagues were forced to demonstrate how their Calvinistic theology does not lead to discouragement and moral laxity. In Preston's response to the Arminian challenge, it can be seen that a kind of compromise has taken place. This compromise can be noted in regard to (1) the relaxing of the doctrine of double predestination, in that the decree of reprobation only becomes actualized after the individual turns away from his conditional covenant obligations, and ceases to pray and engage in holy endeavors. Until that moment occurs, the individual can engage in a life of obedience that will hopefully result in God instilling saving faith in that person; (2) the heightening of contractual language, which emphasizes the necessity of obedience of every member of the covenant, reprobate and saint alike; (3) the notion of preparation, which tends to stress the natural ability of man to prepare for the experience of justifying faith.

These three compromising points demonstrate that in the face of the Arminian challenge, Preston was unable to maintain completely Calvin's doctrines of double predestination and total impotency of the human will. Preston struggles hard against the Arminians, but, in taking seriously the problems of discouragement and moral laxity, his covenant theology and ethics are cast in such a way that the positions of Calvin are no longer held in their purest form. Slight but significant modifications develop. The tendency to drift toward modification becomes all the more easy due to the type of Puritan theology that was popular in the sixteenth century. Theologians such as Tyndale and Hooper set a pattern for the later incorporation of certain Arminian notions, including the tendency, seen most sharply in the doctrine of the covenant of works, to focus on the problem of lawlessness rather than faithlessness. This dissertation has attempted to demonstrate that Preston's theology includes basic doctrines held by Calvin: predestination, one covenant in the history of salvation, the unity of the Old and New Testaments, an ethic of obligation derived from the covenant, justification by faith alone, the necessity of good works, the total depravity of man. But in his own development of these doctrines, Preston is forced to respond to the challenges of his own age, and none were more serious than Arminianism. In his response, certain modifications become necessary.

But there is one additional possible explanation for the differences between Calvin and Preston. We have observed that Preston, in contrast to Calvin, has a tendency to grant extreme importance to the contractual nature of the covenant, and thereby to concentrate more heavily than Calvin on law and obedience. Might not this tendency arise from a more literal interpretation of the biblical doctrine of the covenant? If God is seen in a totally literal way as binding himself in the covenant with man, then certainly the outcome would be a tendency to stress the obligations of man as he enters into covenant with God, and the result would be that legal motifs would come to play a very crucial role in the overall theology. Therefore, it is possible to propose that the real difference between Preston and Calvin involves a departure in hermeneutics.

Calvin's theology is founded on the infinite distance between God and man. Whatever man knows of God, it has been possible only through God's revelation. Man never knows God in his essence: "Indeed, how can the mind by its own leading come to search out God's essence when it cannot even get to its own? Let us then willingly leave to God the knowledge of himself."[63] Man can never speculate about the being of God. As a result of this distance between the transcendence of God and the depravity of man, one must learn that whatever knowledge of God is given to man, must be tempered to human capacity.[64] This is the principle of accommodation. Calvin writes, in regard to God:

> Surely his infinity ought to make us afraid to try to measure him by our own senses. Indeed, his spiritual nature forbids our imagining anything earthly or carnal of him . . . . The Anthropomorphites, who imagine a corporeal God from the fact that Scripture often ascribes to him a mouth, ears, eyes, hands, and feet are

> easily refuted. For who even of slight intelligence does not understand that, as nurses commonly do with infants, God is wont in a measure to 'lisp' in speaking to us? Thus such forms of speaking do not so much express clearly what God is like as accommodate the knowledge of him to our slight capacity. To do this he must descend far beneath his loftiness.[65]

Forstman points out that the principle of accommodation means to Calvin that natural theology is now of secondary importance, since, in order to accommodate himself to man, scripture becomes necessary, and thus revelation is communicated to men through human channels, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.[66] In this way "the Holy Spirit uses language that is not precisely proper to the subject being discussed but which nevertheless is used out of condescension to the human capacity."[67]

An example of the way in which this principle is used by Calvin can be seen in his response to those biblical passages that refer to God "repenting." According to Calvin, "concerning repentance, we ought so to hold that it is no more chargeable against God than is ignorance, error, or powerlessness."[68] When God is spoken of as repenting "the change of mind is to be taken figuratively."[69] Therefore, Calvin writes that

> because our weakness does not attain to his exalted state, the description of him that is given to us must be accommodated to our capacity so that we may understand it.[70]

The mode of accommodation is for God "to represent himself to us not as he is in himself, but as he seems to us."[71] This is why "whenever we hear that God is angered, we ought not to imagine any emotion in him, but rather to consider that this expression has been taken from our own human experience."[72] Forstman contends that Calvin's principle of accommodation amounts to a "program of demythologization."[73] While the vast majority of what contemporary man would call biblical myth is accepted in a literal way by Calvin, he does engage in the process of demythologization in his doctrine of God. Thus, he was aware of the need to note carefully anthropomorphic language about God, which "occurs when we attribute to God human passions, attachments and modes of life."[74] Forstman writes:

> It can easily be seen, then, how Calvin cannot allow those passages to stand which attribute to God any human activities or sense. Whenever he comes to a verse which attributes such things to God, he takes pains to make unmistakably clear that the language is improper and that the author doesn't really mean what he says, but that the Holy Spirit is here accommodating his language to our low capacities.[75]

Forstman lists a number of such characteristics of God contained in the Bible to which Calvin applies the principle of accommodation: remembering, resting, repenting, returning, sleeping, yearning, smelling, seeing, wondering, laughing, speaking, and using spears and bucklers.[76] In this endeavor Calvin is concerned with "the immutability and wholly otherness of God."[77] Forstman believes that the importance that Calvin gives to Christ as the Mediator to the Hebrews arises from this concern:

> The reader of Calvin may be led to think that God is so wholly other that he has no relationship at all with men, and even that he has never had relationship with them in the past. The relationship has always occurred through Christ.[78]

To what extent does this principle of accommodation help us in understanding Calvin's covenant theology? Most obviously, it means that Calvin is going to be very reticent to accept literally any descriptions of the covenanting God that are drawn from human experience. Thus, the Puritan tendency to think of the covenant of grace in terms of "a contract as was used among men of business, a bond or a mortgage, an agreement between two parties, signed and sworn to, and binding upon both," does not apply to Calvin.[79] To think of God as binding himself would be to apply anthropomorphic language to God. Hence, the entire covenant conception in Preston seems to engage in more anthropomorphisms than one can find in Calvin's conception. Thus, Preston writes that the covenant agreement implies a "kind of equality between us," and the awareness of this equality should lead to praise of God, for "what am I . . . that I should be raised hither to, that I should enter into Covenant with the great God, that he should come to a compact and agreement with men, that he should tie himself, and bind himself to become a debtor to me."[80] Calvin wishes to avoid

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such language, for God cannot properly be said to be a "debtor," just as he cannot be said to "repent" or "smell" or "see." If such language is used, it must refer to the individual's perception of God, rather than being drawn from the content of revelation.

But one must carefully note that Calvin believes that many of the biblical references to God do quite adequately express God as he has revealed himself to man. Thus, the idea that God is a covenanting God seems to adequately express the content of revelation. Most "positive terms, such as God's love and fatherhood, although still treated at times with a view to their analogical character, are generally regarded as much more adequate to the meaning they are meant to carry, thus are frequently used without warnings about their metaphorical quality."[81] Therefore, while the critical contemporary religious man would understand the description of the love of God as anthropomorphic in the same way as the repentance of God, Calvin seems to cut short his "program of demythologization." Therefore, biblical language concerning the covenant must, in Calvin's view, fairly adequately express God as he has made himself known to man.

But the principle of accommodation as employed by Calvin helps to understand why the covenant is thought of in less contractual terms than one finds in the Puritan thought

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of Preston. To reduce God's covenantal relationship with man to something comparable to a bond, a mortgage, or an agreement, amounts to a loss of focus on the doctrine of the transcendence of God. Anthropomorphic language functions to create "equality" between God and man. The unknowable God becomes very knowable, the mysterious God becomes less mysterious, and the God who owes man nothing becomes the God to whom one can "sue" for the Spirit which brings sanctification.

On the basis of the principle of accommodation, it is possible to argue that in Calvin's covenant theology all biblical language about the conditionality of the covenant involves the Holy Spirit accommodating his language to man's low capacities. In this sense conditional language arises from human perception of the need to engage in a life of obedience in response to the loving God who has instilled faith and the power of regeneration. Such an interpretation is consistent with the general tenor of Calvin's thought, for a literal understanding of conditionality would seem to "bind" God to human decision-making, an event that cannot occur ontologically, since, on the one hand, man lacks free will, and, on the other hand, God is wholly other, issuing his decrees of election without concern for human merit. But this interpretation should not lead the reader to conclude that notions of mutuality and conditionality are unimportant for Calvin. Since the Holy Spirit found it necessary to use such language in the writing of scripture, as a way of accommodating to man's low capacity, Calvin evidently finds it appropriate to continue the language in his sermons to the people of Geneva. But it must be remembered that Calvin does not formulate this language in the contractual manner of the Puritans, and the reason for this lies in his desire to safeguard the doctrines of God's transcendence and man's depravity.

Yet, there are some indications in Preston's thought that one must be cautious in describing the covenantal action of God in terms that are too anthropomorphic. For instance, there is qualifying note in this statement by Preston:

> 'I will make my covenant between me and thee'; that is . . . I am willing to enter into Covenant with thee . . . I will bind myself, I will engage myself, I will enter into bond, as it were, I will not be at liberty any more, but I am willing even to make a covenant, a compact, and agreement with thee . . .[82]

What does "as it were" mean? Certainly one finds in this qualifying clause a certain reluctance on Preston's part to understand in too literal a vein the popular conception, as expressed in the sixteenth century by Tyndale, of the covenanting God. A certain uneasiness over the literal understanding can thus be seen. However, while similar qualifying notes occasionally can be found in Preston's books, the general tendency of his thought is to employ a

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literal understanding of the covenant. Since the kind of anthropomorphic language that is being used is drawn from both Preston's own experience as well as the experience of biblical man, there results, in comparison with Calvin, an increasing concern for the legal nature of the covenant. On the one hand, the contractual language of the Mosaic covenant results in an emphasis on the obligations of the covenant member, which the reprobate fails to fulfill because of lawlessness. On the other hand, Puritan experience of the seventeenth century included an emphasis on the contractual nature of social life, seen most explicitly in the relationship between king and parliament, an emphasis which surely must have left an imprint on the conceptions of the contract between God and man.[83] Thus, it seems possible to argue that whatever drift there is in Preston towards an emphasis on the contractual nature of the covenant, and the basic sin of man being thought of in terms of lawlessness rather than faithlessness is due in part to the failure to consistently accept the basic principle of Calvin concerning man's knowledge of the wholly transcendent but gracious God.

IV. Covenant Theology and Ethics in Calvin and Preston: An Assessment

This dissertation has sought to demonstrate the underlying agreement in the thought of Calvin and Preston.

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We have seen that for both men the covenant concept is of great importance, providing the foundations for a theology of history and an ethic. Since both theologians argue for the existence of one covenant in the history of salvation, the Old and New Testaments are brought together in a close unity. Both men see the nature of the covenant of grace in terms of the doctrine of election. The covenant is the means by which God implements the decree of salvation; thus the theory of the covenant is formulated out of the background of the doctrine of predestination. Both men argue that while entrance into the general covenant of grace comes through circumcision or baptism, entrance into the peculiar covenant must come through the experience of faith. Preston and Calvin continually remind their readers that human merit is not responsible for God's gracious activity. Both men think of the covenant as being mutual, although, as we have seen, contractual language is used more extensively by Preston. While legal motifs are more predominant in Preston than in Calvin, both theologians seek to derive an ethic from their covenant theology, in that obedience to the law is required of all covenant members. The covenant member, whether belonging to the conditional or absolute covenant, responds with obedience out of gratitude for being within the covenant of grace, and out of an awareness that God's covenantal promises apply to only those individuals who live a holy and righteous life. Obedience is required of all; but only those individuals who are the beneficiaries of God's special grace will become sanctified. Likewise, both theologians turn to ethical behavior as a way of promoting assurance that one is within the peculiar covenant.[84] One must remember that, in comparison with Calvin, the hermeneutic of Preston involves a tendency toward literalism, while Calvin is more aware of the limitations of all language that seeks to describe the activity of God.

At this point in the dissertation it is necessary to examine the way in which covenant theology and ethics function in the thought of Calvin and Preston. In spite of the important differences that have been found between the two men, the underlying agreement allows one to reach the following conclusions.

First, the primary function of covenant theology in the thought of Calvin and Preston can be found in the manner in which this theology seeks to overcome the distance between the transcendent, wholly other God of the universe and depraved humanity. This distance is the starting point of Reformed theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; it is, in fact, one of the basic doctrines of Reformation theology. In understanding this notion of distance, it is helpful to contrast Protestantism with Catholicism in regard to the ways in which this distance can

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be overcome. Peter Berger writes that

> if compared with the 'fulness' of the Catholic universe, Protestantism appears as a radical truncation, a reduction to 'essentials' at the expense of a vast wealth of religious contents. This is especially true of the Calvinist version of Protestantism, but to a considerable degree the same may be said of the Lutheran and even the Anglican Reformations.[85]

According to Berger, Protestantism, in comparison with Catholicism, can be "described in terms of an immense shrinkage in the scope of the sacred in reality . . . ."[86] Berger points out that the sacraments are divested of its more numinous qualities; there is a loss of significance in miracles; the network of intercession is dismissed. Therefore, Berger states:

> At the risk of some simplification, it can be said that Protestantism divested itself as much as possible from the three most ancient and most powerful concomitants of the sacred-mystery, miracle, and magic. This process has been aptly caught in the phrase 'disenchantment of the world.' The Protestant believer no longer lives in a world ongoingly penetrated by sacred beings and forces. Reality is polarized between a radically transcendent divinity and a radically 'fallen' humanity that, *ipso facto*, is devoid of sacred qualities. Between them lies an altogether 'natural' universe, God's creation to be sure, but in itself bereft of numinousity.[87]

One consequence of this polarized reality is that the individual is forced into a position of finding the path by which one might overcome the distance between God and man.[88] It is the plight of the individual. As Berger states: ". . . the radical transcendence of God confronts a universe

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of radical immanence, of 'closedness' to the sacred. Religiously speaking, the world becomes very lonely indeed."[89] Max Weber expresses the same viewpoint, when he writes, while reflecting on the eternal decrees of the transcendent God, that the doctrine of God's election "must above all have had one consequence for the life of a generation which surrendered to its magnificent consistency. This was a feeling of unprecedented inner loneliness of the single individual."[90] For a religious age, loneliness is the necessary outcome of a theology that focuses on the totally transcendent God, while stressing the fallenness of man.

Covenant theology appears as the unique solution of the Reformed tradition to the problem created by the polarization of reality. The distance between the transcendent and unknowable God and fallen man is closed through the concept that God has extended to at least some men a covenant of grace. The covenant thereby becomes the one channel by which the reality of God and the reality of man are brought together. But in order that it function as a true channel, reciprocation is considered to be an essential part of the covenant. God breaks through the distance by establishing a covenant with man, wherein he offers salvation but demands in return a life of faith and obedience. Yet, in regard to this divine action, the covenant theology of Calvin and Preston continues to acknowledge the distance:

God's gracious act is not dependent on anything that man has done; God is not responding to even the noblest attempts of man to span the distance through his own efforts, for all such attempts are colored by human sin. God not only grants the covenant, which biblical man patterned after the model of ancient suzerainty treaties between the political ruler and his people, he also instills faith and gives the means by which sanctification can be achieved.[91] In Calvin's thought in particular one finds a continuing intense desire to make sure the covenant conception does not involve a lowering or lessening of God's transcendence. God himself does not directly initiate the covenant; Christ as Mediator fulfills this role. Likewise, as we have seen, the principle of accommodation does not allow Calvin to think of God in terms of a debtor, or one who has sacrificed some of his own power so that a contractual relationship can exist. In Preston, and evidently in other Puritans as well, there is more of a tendency to tie down the incomprehensible, mysterious, and essentially unknowable God.

Nevertheless, in Calvin as well as in Preston, one sees covenant theology functioning to bridge the distance between God and man. By becoming a member of the covenant of grace, one can find himself in a "right" relationship with the divine. Since the church exists as the community of the covenant of grace, the principle extra ecclesiam _nulla salus_ holds true. There is no "right" relationship with the divine, no salvation, outside the covenant. The covenant is the _one_ means by which a relationship with God can be established. While being a member of the covenant does not guarantee salvation, there is at least the potential for salvation to occur. One must remember that within the covenant there are two groups, those that experience something of the grace of God, but who are deceived in the experience of faith, and thus are beneficiaries of only God's general election, and those who are indeed the saints, recipients of God's particular election. Outside the covenant, there is no hope at all that the distance between God and man can be overcome.

Secondly, covenant theology in the thought of Calvin and Preston functions to make history an important area of human concern. God's covenanting with man results in a history of this covenantal relationship, and thereby a theology of history emerges. Since the concern of these thinkers is on man's relationship to God and God's relationship to man, all ultimately important aspects of life are seen in terms of the covenant. History becomes important to the Reformed theologians in the same manner in which history became important to the ancient Hebrew, who saw all vital aspects of his life in terms of the covenantal relationship between God and the nation Israel. Covenant theology emerged in Hebrew thought as a concomitant to the transcendentalization of the one God. Peter Berger points out that in the same manner in which Protestants demythologized the Catholic universe, the Hebrews demythologized Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultural thought.[92] Berger writes:

> It may be said that the transcendentalization of God and the concomitant 'disenchantment of the world' opened up a 'space' for history as the arena of both divine and human actions. The former are performed by a God standing entirely outside the world. The latter presuppose a considerable individuation in the conception of man. Man appears as the historical actor before the face of God . . .[93]

The parallels between Reformed theology and Hebrew thought are many; but in this case of the motif of historization we have a very clear example. The transcendent God acts historically, and the occasions of this acting become the central events in the theology of history: the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and new covenants. As has been noted, Preston pushes behind the Abrahamic covenant, to the covenant of works initiated with Adam, to allow all of human "history" to be interpreted from the perspective of God's covenantal activity with man.

It is not by chance then that progressive motifs play an important role in the theologies of Calvin and Preston. Where a linear conception of history comes into consciousness, there is a goal to which history is moving. Each renewal of the covenant brought a clarifying of the

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nature of God and the responsibilities of man, that is, the knowledge of God and the knowledge of man. Thus, particularly in regard to Calvin, covenant theology provides a theology of history in which the community of believers becomes more refined and obedient in response to God's increasing involvement in human history. This understanding can not be removed from an interpretation of the actual life situation of Calvin and Preston. Certainly part of the explanation for Calvin's embittered and sharp attacks on the Catholic church can be found in his conviction that the church had ceased to be a true church, not only because it no longer faithfully preached the Word and truly administered the sacraments, but also because it had brought about through its ethical deprivation an interruption in God's attempt to create the holy community. Likewise, Preston and his colleagues felt the Anglican church failed to live up to the goals of the Reformation; it too was resisting God's purpose in covenanting with man, the creation of a people who would be obedient to God. Therefore, the work of Calvin as well as the Puritans involved the attempt to create the ideal holy community. History becomes an important area of human concern. Without this awareness, one cannot adequately understand Calvin's work in Geneva, Puritan attacks on King and Archbishop, the Puritan migration to the new world to set up "God's New Israel." Man's work on earth is to glorify God, states Calvin, and thus history becomes a meaningful arena in which one can accomplish his tasks. Max Weber writes, in regard to this Calvinistic emphasis:

> God requires social achievement of the Christian because He wills that social life shall be organized according to His commandments, in accordance with that purpose. The social activity of the Christian in the world is solely activity _in majorem glorian Dei_.[94]

The foundation for this emphasis must be found in the concept of the covenant, which functions as the one means by which God and man are united. God's covenanting action is action within history, through which is created a community of believers who will respond to him in faith _and_ obedience.

Thirdly, covenant theology in Calvin and Preston functions to provide a theoretical foundation for ethical behavior. This thesis has attempted to demonstrate the close relationship that exists between covenant theology and ethics in the thought of the two theologians in question. The ethic of Calvin and Preston is a covenantal ethic. God's gracious act of extending the covenant to man was followed by the demand that he who assumes a covenantal relationship with God must live a life of faith and obedience. The kind of obedience demanded is known through the moral law of the Old Testament. While Adam knew this law, and the patriarchs also knew what was expected of them, the law took on written form during the Mosaic renewal of the covenant.

The ethic developed by Calvin and Preston is one of

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obligation. The full requirements of the covenantal relationship include faith followed by obedience. The individual cannot fulfill this obligation through his own strength, and thus only he who has been elected to salvation will live a truly obedient life. Yet, all covenantal members must live by God's law. The beneficiary of God's general election is as obligated as the saint. The ethic developed is comprehensive, covering all areas of life.[95]

While it can be seen that the ethic is derived from the type of covenant conception employed by Calvin and Preston, one can also argue that covenant theology functions to legitimate the ethic. The ethic is not only considered to be grounded in the will of God, and therefore worthy to be followed by all individuals, it is also considered to be the kind of ethic that will be faithfully followed by those individuals who have been elected to salvation, as indicated in the covenant formula itself. Thus, in answer to the question, "why must I engage in a life of self-denial?" Calvin and Preston can reply that only he who practices this ethic can begin to hope that he has been elected to salvation.[96] Obedience is thereby pressed upon every member of the church. Covenant theology thus becomes the ultimate way of legitimizing the ethic. Berger, in defining the sociological significance of the term "legitimation," states that the word refers to any socially objectivated

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"knowledge" that serves to explain and justify the social order.[97] In the Reformed tradition, the theologians seized upon the ancient covenant idea as the appropriate way of explaining the relationship of the divine to the human world. From the covenant idea, an ethic is developed, on the basis of scripture, as seen in Calvin's notions of self-denial, bearing the cross, and meditation on the future life. But once the ethic is formulated, covenant theology functions to legitimate that ethic. Hence, one must practice "scriptural morality" because it is demanded by the covenantal relationship between God and man. He who does not practice the ethic aligns himself with those who are outside the covenant of grace, and who are, therefore, no longer in a "right" relationship with ultimate reality. One who is within the covenant of grace may not know for sure if he has been elected to salvation or damnation, but as long as he practices the ethic, and is a member of the covenant of grace, the universe certainly takes on a more friendly atmosphere. Order, a sense of "rightness," is thereby obtained. Hence, the power of the Calvinistic ethic must be found in its close relationship to covenant theology. Any culture that asks its people to engage in a spiritual, rule-type ethic, in which all of life is systematized, must offer rewards for this type of instinctual renunciation.[98] The rewards that come are significant: one becomes a member of the covenant of grace, which serves as the one channel between God and man. An ethic of self-denial is an ethic of instinctual renunciation, but only through such renunciation can one gain confidence that he not only is a member of the covenant of grace, but that he has been chosen by God for salvation.

From the perspective of the foregoing discussion, one can understand the fear of sectarianism in the Calvinistic tradition of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This fear is especially pronounced in regard to those groups who are antinomian. Sectarianism implies a loss of control over the community. If there were to occur separation of church and state, the church would no longer function as the moral arm of the state, providing the rationale for obedient, holy living. Moral chaos, it was feared, would engulf the community. But sectarianism also would involve an attack on the concept of the covenant itself. There exists a close relationship between the covenant of grace and the church, in that the church exists as the community that has been covenanted with God. To withdraw from the "true" church, is to attack the structure of the church as it has been formulated on the basis of covenant theology. In the case of the Separatists, the church exists only of the elect, who could be known by the criteria of faith and obedience, particularly the latter.[99] The Calvinist notion that the decrees of God are known only to God is lost, and thus the church no longer consists of the beneficiaries of God's general and particular elections existing side by side. In the Separatist scheme, not everyone will belong to the church, and thus, from the perspective of a John Preston, there will follow a loss of clerical control over the community, with the result that moral decay will set in. In the case of the Spiritualists and the Quakers, the covenant conception is completely ignored: one can be united with God without recourse to the covenant. One's relationship to the divine, expressed in terms of mystical union between the believer and Christ, becomes a private affair, and the whole notion of a covenantal community, so important to the covenant theorists, is lost. In this situation, there exists no way of controlling and promoting morality. Thus, argued the Calvinists, if the covenant is ignored, ethical behavior will degenerate, and moral chaos will result. From the perspective of the preceding discussion, the legitimating power of covenant theology to encourage obedient living will disappear, and the result would be that ethical standards, God's rule for man, would collapse.

Fourthly, covenant theology functions to grant assurance of salvation. Whereas one can argue that in Roman Catholicism assurance of salvation comes through the

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institutional church, and in Lutheranism through mystical union with Christ, in the early Reformed tradition assurance is gained through the covenant conception.[100] This dissertation has sought to make clear that the problem of assurance is very keen in the theologies of Calvin and Preston, and that this problem emerges from the doctrine of election and the denial of free will. Weber is correct when he states that the question, "Am I one of the elect?" was of crucial importance to the Reformed tradition.[101] But Weber errs in failing to realize that this was as true in the case of Calvin as it was in the later Puritans.

The essential problem that emerges from the doctrine of election is the recognition that even the reprobate, as Calvin states, "have signs of a call that are similar to those of the elect."[102] Charles Hall and Wilhelm Niesel are correct in their understanding that Calvin teaches that those who are elected to salvation will not fall, and this doctrine grants a sense of comfort and confidence to those who have faith. But this position is insensitive to Calvin's awareness that the reprobate can have a type of faith experience that the individual thinks is genuine.

> For though only those predestined to salvation receive the light of faith and truly feel the power of the gospel, yet experience shows that the reprobate are sometimes affected by almost the same feeling as the elect, so that even in their own judgment they do not in any way differ from the elect.[103]

Preston echoes the same understanding, contending that what many men claim is true faith is in reality counterfeit and ineffectual faith. Preston is very much concerned with exploring the nature of counterfeit faith, and in this exploration he again and again comes back to a discussion of ethics. Furthermore, both Calvin and Preston agree that even the elect are periodically seized with doubts concerning their salvation.

If one is seeking to find assurance of salvation, he is forced to examine his covenantal status. The complete covenantal requirement is faith coupled with obedience. Since justification and sanctification are inseparable, he who has had his sins forgiven by God, will be living a holy, disciplined life.[104] Weber states: "If we now ask further, by what fruits the Calvinist thought himself able to identify true faith? the answer is: by a type of Christian conduct which served to increase the glory of God."[105] Without sanctification, without holiness of life, the individual is forced to conclude that his sins have not been forgiven, and therefore he is not of the particular elect. This is why Calvin writes that "the object of regeneration . . . is to manifest in the life of believers a harmony and agreement between God's righteousness and their obedience, and thus to confirm the adoption that they have received as sons."[106] Weber expresses this point when he states that

> however useless good works might be as a means of attaining salvation, for even the elect remain beings of the flesh, and everything they do falls infinitely short of divine standards, nevertheless, they are indispensable as a sign of election. They are the technical means, not of purchasing salvation, but of getting rid of the fear of damnation.[107]

A hypocrite "can counterfeit many things," argues Preston, but not the mortification of the old man.[108]

But if one should press further to find out the nature of obedient living in the lives of the elect, the point that is stressed is the element of consistency in following covenantal law. Consistency in ethical living becomes the final criterion in ascertaining one's covenantal status. Both Calvin and Preston maintain that the elected individual remains a sinner, but his life is different from the hypocrite in that he gains the upper hand over sin, and gradually becomes more holy, worthy of the salvation that awaits him. The motif that has been referred to as "consistency" is understood by Weber to be "systematic self-control." Thus, "the God of Calvinism demanded of his believers not single good works, but a life of good works combined into a unified system."[109] The individual is to examine himself on the whole "course of his life: "We are not to be judged by a few actions, and a few paces, but by the constant tenor of our life, by what we do in ordinary, and usual course."[110] Unchangeableness becomes the chief characteristic of the saint: he does not waver in his ethical obligations.

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As a result of the emphasis on election, covenant theology becomes extremely important in granting assurance of salvation.[111] The covenant theology of Calvin and Preston states very clearly that he who is allowed, through the regenerating power of the Spirit, to assume a covenantal relationship with God, will live by faith and will be obedient to the moral law. Since the experience of faith by itself can be deceptive, obedience becomes crucially important in ascertaining one's salvation. Thus, one finds in the thought of Calvin and Preston a conviction that good works in no way contribute to salvation, yet such works do provide the one final and objective way of determining whether or not one has been elected to salvation. The insecurity derived from the fear of damnation thereby contributes to the motivating power of the Calvinistic ethic.

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FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

[1] W. Adams Brown, "Covenant Theology," in Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. James Hasting, Vol. IV (New York, 1908), p. 216.

[2] Die Probleme der Theologie Calvins, quoted in Wilhelm Niesel, The Theology of Calvin (Philadelphia, 1956), first published 1938 (Munich).

[3] A fresh attempt to understand Calvin's Christology is made by E. David Willis, Calvin's Catholic Christology (Leiden, 1966), quoted earlier. But further analysis of Calvin's Christology by way of covenant theology would prove helpful.

[4] 2:10:2, p. 429.

[5] The New Covenant (London, 1634), p. 326.

[6] The New Covenant, p. 381.

[7] See Perry Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Boston, 1953), Chapter 1.

[8] The New Covenant, pp. 180-181.

[9] The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love (London, 1630), p. 20.

[10] Edward A. Dowey, Jr., The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology (New York, 1952), p. 170.

[11] 3:2:19, p. 565.

[12] 3:2:4, pp. 546-547.

[13] 3:2:4, p. 547.

[14] 3:2:15, p. 560.

[15] Norman Pettit, The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life (New Haven, 1966), p. 77.

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[16] *The New Covenant*, pp. 180-181.

[17] Sermon on Deuteronomy 26:16-19, *Corpus Reformatorum*, Vol. XXVIII, 293, trans. Golding, quoted in Hoekema, "The Covenant of Grace in Calvin's Teaching," *Calvin Theological Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (November, 1967), p. 157.

[18] J. G. Matheson supports this view, see "Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 2 (1949), p. 48.

[19] Commentary on Exodus 1:17, *FLBM*, trans. C. W. Bingham (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1950), Vol. I, p. 33 (*C R*, XXIV, 17).

[20] 3:2:11, p. 555.

[21] *The New Covenant*, p. 402. A further point of clarification is in order regarding the contention that the practice of scriptural morality takes on importance in Calvin's thought in determining for oneself one's covenantal status. This position should not be confused with Calvin's very clear condemnation in Book I of the *Institutes* of the individual who does not correlate his knowledge of self with the knowledge of God. To evaluate the self, as a way of gaining a sense of spiritual worth, without an adequate knowledge of God, must be condemned. Calvin states: "As long as we do not look beyond the earth, being quite content with our own righteousness, wisdom, and virtue, we flatter ourselves most sweetly, and fancy ourselves all but demigods." (1:1:2, p. 38) The point that is under consideration is how does the individual who has contemplated God, who has seen that God's judgments are a "deep abyss," and who confesses that ultimately God's methods of governing the universe, including his predestining activity, are "hidden from us," gain a sense of confidence that he is in a right relationship to God? The answer can only be found in God's saving activity, in the granting of the covenant of grace, whereby justification and sanctification take place. The man who seeks to gain his assurance through ethical conduct, without contemplating God, without understanding his sinfulness, and without the experience of faith, is surely condemned by his *hubris*. But this is not the case of the Christian pilgrim who has correlated his knowledge of self with his knowledge of God. While this individual may never be able to have ultimate assurance that he is predestined to salvation, Calvin encourages the believer to counteract his doubts and despair, through constant analysis of his faith, and through the progress he has made in obedient Christian living, for the fruits of regeneration are "proof" of the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit. From this perspective it is clear that Calvin would condemn any tendency to separate assurance that comes through the practice of scriptural morality from

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experience. We have already noted that in the development of Puritanism, particularly in New England, there developed the motif that external as well as internal blessings would come to the covenant member, and that such external benefits were thought to demonstrate that individual's right relationship to God. This indeed is the hubris that Calvin mentions in Book I, for in this situation the knowledge of man is no longer correlated with the knowledge of God. Any theology that promotes this attitude has failed to understand the content of revelation, and the meaning of the covenant of grace. Calvin is clear on the point that the covenantal promises are limited to justification and sanctification; to include material blessing is to misunderstand the gift of the covenant.

[22] 2:1:4, p. 245.

[23] 2:1:4, p. 245.

[24] 2:1:4, pp. 245-246.

[25] Holmes Rolston, III, "Responsible Man in Reformed Theology: Calvin Versus the Westminster Confession," Scottish Journal of Theology 23 (May, 1970), p. 133.

[26] Rolston, p. 144.

[27] Rolston, p. 144.

[28] Rolston, p. 143.

[29] Rolston, pp. 141-142.

[30] Perry Miller, The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century (Boston, 1954), p. 375.

[31] The New Covenant, pp. 240-241.

[32] The New Covenant, p. 460.

[33] Westminster Shorter Catechism, quoted by Rolston, p. 149.

[34] Saints Qualifications (London, 1637), p. 17.

[35] Commentary on Exodus 19:10, FLBM, Vol. 1, p. 323 (C R, XXIV, 199).

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[36] 2:3:6, p. 297.

[37] Everett H. Emerson, "Calvin and Covenant Theology," Church History, XXX (1956), p. 140.

[38] T. H. L. Parker, The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God: A Study in the Theology of John Calvin (Edinburgh and London, 1952), quoted in Emerson, p. 140.

[39] C. J. Sommerville, "Conversion Versus the Early Puritan Covenant of Grace," Journal of Presbyterian History 44 (S, 1966), p. 189, quoting The New Covenant.

[40] Life Eternal (London, 1634), Part II, p. 92.

[41] Life Eternal, Part II, p. 98.

[42] 3:21:5, p. 926.

[43] Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province, p. 65.

[44] Pettit, pp. 100-101.

[45] The Puritan concern for conversion has been well documented. See William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism (New York, 1938), and Sommerville, pp. 178-197.

[46] L. J. Trinterud, "The Origins of Puritanism," Church History, XX (March, 1951), p. 55.

[47] See Reinhold Seeberg, Textbook of the History of Doctrines (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1964), Vol. II, p. 211.

[48] Trinterud, p. 39.

[49] William Tyndale, "A Pathway to Holy Scriptures," (1525) in Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of Holy Scripture, ed. Parker Society (Cambridge, 1848), p. 27.

[50] Gens Møller, "The Beginnings of Puritan Covenant Theology," Journal of Ecclesiastical History, Vol. 14 (April, 1963), quoting Tyndale, p. 52.

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[51] Tyndale, "Prologue Upon the Gospel of St. Mathew," in Doctrinal Treatises, p. 474.

[52] Tyndale, "A Pathway to Holy Scriptures," pp. 24 and 27.

[53] Trinterud, p. 39.

[54] Møller, quoting Tyndale, p. 53.

[55] Tyndale, "Prologue Upon the Gospel of St. Matthew," p. 472.

[56] John Hooper, "A Declaration of the Ten Holy Commandments," (1548), in Early Writings of Bishop Hooper, ed. Parker Society (Cambridge, 1848), p. 155.

[57] Robert Harris, A Treatise of the New Covenant (London, 1632), p. 121.

[58] John F. H. New, Anglican and Puritan: The Basis of Their Opposition, 1558-1640 (Stanford, 1964), p. 13.

[59] New, p. 13.

[60] New, p. 14.

[61] New, p. 15.

[62] Alan Simpson, Puritanism in Old and New England (Chicago, 1955), p. 13.

[63] 1:13:21, p. 146.

[64] H. Jackson Forstman, Word and Spirit: Calvin's Doctrine of Biblical Authority (Stanford, 1962), p. 13.

[65] 1:13:1, p. 121. See also Commentary on Jonah 3:10, Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1950), Vol. III, pp. 115-116.

[66] Forstman, p. 14.

[67] Forstman, p. 107.

[68] 1:17:12, p. 226.

[69] 1:17:12, p. 226.

[70] 1:17:13, p. 227.

[71] 1:17:13, p. 227.

[72] 1:17:13, p. 227.

[73] Forstman, p. 113.

[74] Commentary on Psalm 10:1, in Forstman, p. 114.

[75] Forstman, p. 115.

[76] Forstman, p. 115.

[77] Forstman, p. 115.

[78] Forstman, p. 115.

[79] This quotation is from Perry Miller, The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century, p. 375.

[80] The New Covenant, p. 331.

[81] Dowey, p. 243.

[82] The New Covenant, p. 316.

[83] The Importance of social philosophy for the development of covenant theology has been well documented. See, for instance, Trinterud, pp. 51-52, and Perry Miller, The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century, Chapter XIV. The later states: ". . . federal theology was essentially part of a universal tendency in European thought to change social relationships from status to contract, that it was one expression of late Renaissance speculation, which was moving in a general way away from the ideas of feudalism, from the belief that society must be modeled upon an eternally fixed hierarchy to the theories of constitutional limitation and voluntary origins, to the protection of individual rights and the shattering

of sumptuary economic regulations. There can be no doubt that these theologians inserted the federal idea into the very substance of divinity, that they changed the relation even of God to man from necessity to contract, largely because contractualism was becoming increasingly congenial to the age and in particular to Puritans." p. 399.

[84] A further point is also in order. As mentioned earlier, Calvin teaches that God does reward one's ethical behavior, if that individual has been justified. See Hoekema, p. 161. Hoekema quotes Calvin: "Thus we see how we ought to understand the texts of holy Scripture where God promises us recompense. We must not conclude from them that we merit anything, or that our works are of any value, or that God is in any way bound to us, but he does it to stir us up to take courage better to serve him, but are credited to our account, and the profit of them returns to us."

[85] Peter L. Berger, The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion (Garden City, New York, 1967), p. 111.

[86] Berger, p. 111.

[87] Berger, pp. 111-112.

[88] From the perspective of a Calvinist; it is, of course, not a matter of "finding" the path, but of being led, by the Holy Spirit, toward the path.

[89] Berger, p. 112.

[90] Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (New York, 1958), p. 104.

[91] See George E. Mendenhall, Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East (Pittsburgh, 1955).

[92] Berger, p. 117.

[93] Berger, p. 118.

[94] Weber, p. 108.

[95] Thus in the ethical thought of Calvin and Preston one finds a peculiar handling of the tension between freedom and discipline. See

J. G. Matheson, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life," Scottish Journal of Theology 2 (1949), pp. 48-56. We agree with Matheson's judgment that "Calvin assumes, without any ado, that a prescribed rule of conduct is necessary."(p. 51) Matheson goes on to state: "There is a difficulty here. Discipline is an expression of the law, not of grace. We have to face, therefore, the theological difficulty of reconciling the need for discipline with the truth that in Christ we are not under law but under grace . . . . However, much it may be true that regulation is required, it is also true that no regulation must be allowed to hamper the free operation of the Holy Spirit . . . . In a saint, for example, there is always a suggestion of the anarchist . . . . It is an omission in Calvin's treatment of the Christian life in the chapters under review, that he makes no mention at all of this necessary tension between the freedom of grace and the rule of law. . . . In this whole section of the Institutes [3:6-10] the doctrine of union with Christ by faith, so powerfully expounded elsewhere, is curiously absent." (p. 52) Preston follows Calvin in this tendency.

[96] At the same time, the individual is, of course, contributing to the glory of God. But the focus of the ethic, as seen in the fact that obedient living grants assurance and contributes to the glory of God is on the individual and his relationship to God. Calvin's ethic can therefore be criticized in that it insufficiently encourages love towards one's neighbor. Matheson supports this criticism: ". . . there is a danger that Christian people lay such exclusive stress in devotion to God alone, that their attitude to men becomes impersonal and the duty of serving one another in love is neglected. It is into this . . . error which is included in the command to love one another is almost entirely neglected here [Calvin's ethic, 3:6-10]" p. 54. Weber supports this analysis of the impersonal nature of the Calvinistic ethic, p. 122.

[97] Berger, p. 29.

[98] This argument is used by Sigmund Freud in his analysis of Hebrew culture. See Moses and Monotheism (New York, 1939). Freud uses the term, "Instinctual renunciation," as an abbreviation for "renouncing the satisfaction of an urge derived from an instinct." (p. 144) Freud argues that the high level of spirituality among the Hebrews, in comparison with surrounding cultures, as seen for instance in the prohibition against making images of God, involved instinctual renunciation, "for it signified subordinating sense perception to an abstract idea; it was a triumph of spirituality over the senses." (p. 144) It can be argued that Calvinistic theology and ethics, like Hebrew thought, involved the "triumph of spirituality over the senses." Freud goes on to state, in regard to the Hebrews: "All such progress in spirituality results in increasing self-confidence,

in making people proud so that they feel superior to those who have remained in the bondage of the senses." (pp. 146-147) Might not this form of self-confidence be at the root of the power of the predestined Puritan saints in England? The history of seventeenth-century Puritanism would so indicate.

[99] See Edmund S. Morgan, Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea (Ithaca, 1963), p. 74.

[100] Max Weber writes the following in regard to the Lutheran emphasis: "The highest religious experience which the Lutheran faith strives to attain, especially as it developed in the course of the seventeenth century, is the unio mystica with the deity. As the name itself, which is unknown to the Reformed faith in this form, suggests, it is a feeling of actual absorption in the deity, that of a real entrance of the divine into the soul of the believer. It is qualitatively similar to the aim of the contemplation of the German mystics and is characterized by its passive search for the fulfillment of the yearning for rest in God." (p. 112).

[101] Weber, p. 110.

[102] 3:24:7, p. 973.

[103] 3:2:11, p. 555.

[104] Or, as John von Rohr states, "Sanctification is the test of justification." "Covenant and Assurance in Early English Puritanism," Church History, XXXIV (June, 1965), p. 198.

[105] Weber, p. 114.

[106] 3:6:1, p. 684.

[107] Weber, p. 115.

[108] Thus we understand the significance of Preston's division of the covenant into the conditional covenant (general election) and the absolute and peculiar covenant (special election). Only he who receives the special grace of Christ will be able to fulfill the covenantal requirements imposed on all members of the covenant. Von Rohr states, in regard to this distinction: "Here is the recognition of the divine sovereignty in election and the affirmation that in the last analysis the chosen are God's chosen and not simply those who choose themselves." (p. 200).

[109] Weber, p. 117.

[110] *The New Covenant*, pp. 210-211.

[111] Von Rohr agrees with this statement: "It is then within the context of this covenant-working that the struggle for assurance is often portrayed. This is not to say that all attempts to provide certainty were channeled through the covenant idea. But it is to note that the idea was frequently drawn upon in presenting to anguished spirits adequate grounds for confidence of salvation." (p. 195)

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